

T H E
E R R O R S
• •
I N N O C E N C E,
I N
F I V E V O L U M E S.

"For tho' I will not practise to deceive,

"Yet, to avoid deceit, I mean to learn,"

Shakespeare.

V O L. IV.

L O N D O N:

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WORDS OF INNOCENCE

VI EMULOVANJE ATAKAMA



ERRATA to VOLUME IV.

- Page 6, line 12, for them, read all
P. 27, l. 10, for deilrum, r. delirium
P. 32, l. 6, for way, r. force
P. 89, l. 19, for Ignus, r. Ignis
P. 114, l. 11, for remains, r. remainder
P. 149, l. 13, for preremptory, r. peremptory.



T H E

ERRORS of INNOCENCE.

L E T T E R C V .

*To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen
Nugent.*

Mulberry-Mount, Jan.

TO say I was astonish'd at the receipt
of your two last, is a feeble expres-
sion. Oh, my very soul glow'd by turns
with opposite sensations, to see my sex at
once so ennobled, and debas'd. Weak,
and ill-fated woman! how has she fallen a
victim to herself, and by a criminal indul-
gence, embitter'd those various blessings,
Heaven had so liberally bestow'd! a cor-
rupted

Vol. IV. B

ERRORS OF

rupted heart has infected its gifts, and the united poisons have strengthen'd each other. A victim to the vices of the world, before she has even run thro' half its career of follies, she will, I fear, early set it at defiance. She is not the sacrifice to Mr. Obrien; it is to dissipation, to the rage of distinction, she falls a prey. It is not to gratify the wishes even of a dishonorable lover, that she disgraces a noble and estimable husband; it is thro' the fear of passing an evening alone. Frivolous, even in vice! yet these are the women, whose names disgrace our Courts of Justice: names, sacred in the annals of the past, and sanctified by the most illustrious actions, now adorning some scandalous anecdote in a newspaper, increasing the sale of a despicable pamphlet, or stuck up, amidst the vilest of their sex, at the windows of a licentious print-shop. My heart bleeds for the noble one she has injur'd! Edward has had a fever of indignation ever

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er since he read her letter. . He cannot think, speak, or hear of her with moderation. Lord Melrofs has urg'd us to come to town. Mr. Nugent, I am inclin'd to think, will accept the invitation, only to observe from her actions, how far she dealt sincerely with you. I express'd my hopes that she would do so: he shook his head with most emphatical disgust, and I see does not believe it possible, her error should be conceal'd. Her Lord young, gay, amiable, mixing every where, fought every where, is but too much expos'd to hear the most invidious truths, from those amidst our sex, who envy or hate her; and doubt not, my dear, but there are hundreds who do both. He is not a duellist, I know; but he is at a period of life, when the tumults of the passions are rarely to be govern'd, even by the principles most cherish'd; and tho' I have heard him say, he would not fight but in his profession, Edward shakes his head at

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that too, and seems to know him better than he knows himself. At this time too her guilt is doubly shocking, since a few months more would, I doubt not, from the tenor of his character and conduct, have fixt him decisively hers. His passion for you, ever uncertain, sometimes subsiding in esteem, sometimes debas'd into desire, has never yet attain'd that permanent state, which alone can resist the efforts of reason, principle, and situation; these all unite him to her, and once confirm'd by delicacy or attention in her conduct, would, I doubt not, in time, effectually alienate him from a foreign attachment. Love, my dear, both you and he have prov'd, to be a strong, but not an unconquerable passion; in your bosom as it is more gentle, and more pure, it is consequently more durable. The habits of your life too, are retirement and reflection; every day renders his more active.

tive. Your merit, however, like your struggles, will have the superiority; since your conquests over yourself, will be solely the effort of your virtues, whilst a thousand incidental circumstances will unite to accomplish his. But sunk in fate, how have you risen in merit, above the weak and guilty woman, whose vices have betray'd him. Led alike into error, alike the object of solicitation, alike lovely enough to become the object of censure, the triumphant influence of mind has elevated you, whilst the failure of its exertions, has debas'd and humbled her.— You have risen from every struggle with fresh vigour for the next, only by daring to think you might; she has sunk from weakness to weakness, merely from not directing her understanding to the regulation of a first error. Perfection is not, it is true, the lot of humanity, yet she who aims at it, at least ennobles her failings, no longer sinks the improbable in the im-

possible, and striving to be all that she ought, will insensibly become all that she can.

“ Since but to *wish* more virtue, is to gain.”

As to coming again to town, it is a step nothing but necessity can urge me to.— Yet where the happiness, the honor of those with whom I am so dearly connected, is concern'd, there is nothing I would not undertake! Oh, that vile Obrien, what has he not to answer for! and much I fear, he will answer for them. For you, so hardly tried, surely some happier days must be yet in store; and even whilst thus tried, the sensibilities of exalted minds ravage not the hearts they fill. They only meliorate its virtues, and elevate its hopes: whilst the tumultuous storm of the passions, irritates and hardens it; prepares it for vice, and doubly unfits it for the attendant remorse.

My

INNOCENCE.

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My sweet boy runs about the garden when the weather will permit, and is become the sauciest rogue alive.—He loves his father, better than he does me; a sad proof of his taste, however.—And Edward is passionately fond of him. You will think so, when I tell you he is the most indulgent of the two. So much more, that the other day I very gravely fetch'd a morning cap, and put it on his head, by way of a hint.—Adieu, my dear friend, I will write soon.

H. NUGENT.

LETTER CVI.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs.
Obrien.*

Winbrook, Feb.

THE ruin is at length wound up to its highest pitch. Davenport has stopt payment, and a draft of Mr. Obrien's was amongst the first protested. "Want, worldly want," my dear friend, may probably be my portion: nor am I philosopher enough, I confess, to view it with indifference. But if to *me* a reverse of this nature, is terrible, how much more so must it be to Mr. Obrien; he, who lives but to the world; nor seeks any other deities, than its luxuries, and its ostentations. His temper has been in a state of irritation, that has excited my pity. The house in town, I mean immediately to give up, and the furniture, may perhaps,

perhaps, on some future day, swell out a catalogue, for the amusement of those who have so often sat at my table. Do not suppose I think poverty a certain evil, but in the extreme. . . Thousands have owed both their virtues and enjoyments, to that chasten'd knowledge of themselves it produces; but the melancholy views it too often affords those who have known affluence; the dreary retrospection upon the vices, the frivolousness, and the follies they have indulg'd, (now displayed in their true colours, by their perceiving them, to be the marking ones of those characters they associated with;) the ingratitude, and hardness of heart, such retrospections discover, but too much unfit the mind they fill, for a future intercourse with the world. ! It is true, that the equipages of the profligate, and the ruin'd, still fill our streets; they return, madly to squander the little, chance, or a few years of œconomy, has retriev'd; but their re-

is the craving of an appetite, that loaths the nourishment it seeks. They despise, and are despis'd; they have felt all the bitterness of neglect, and its stings remain in their hearts: they do not associate, they live in a tumult in which they are glad to drown the remembrance of every feeling, and are misanthropes in the bosom of society. Such will Mr. Obrien one day be; such, must he be, if he continues the character he is: and my injuries will revenge themselves. To me, perhaps, some favourable circumstance may arise, from an event full of so many that are the contrary; I may now with fresh vigor, solicit that total separation, I have long and ardently wished.—For it is dreadful to be thus united in fate, with one who by turns excites my fears, my resentment, and my pity. Out of the wreck of my fortune, I may secure a small pittance, which may enable me to fix near you. In your house,

house, (dearly as I love you) I will never be a constant inmate. A thousand reasons of delicacy, prudence, and pride, forbid it, which I need not recapitulate. —All this however, must be deferr'd till Mr. Obrien has recover'd his temper, which I fear, will not be very soon.

And now I must confess my wishes, that you could, consistently with your own domestic comfort, spend a few weeks in Grosvenor-Square. It is the dangerous period, when Lady Melrofs may be saved, or irretrievably lost. I cannot be a guard upon her; for I have no home in town, and as Mr. Obrien will find her even more necessary to his extravagancies, he will leave no step untried towards a second seduction.—Unfortunate woman! for that he loves her not, even according to his own ideas, I much believe; since I have the greatest cause to think, he

voluntarily indulg'd his vanity, by throwing her letter in my way; sure, that whatever my sentiments, regard for Lord Melross, would impose silence upon them; and not entirely aware, that by sending it off to you, I put it out of their power to recover it.

Farewell,

S. O.

LET.

LETTER CVII.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen
Nugent.

Mulberry-Mount, Feb.

YOUR wishes, and your situation, my dear friend, have determin'd me; we shall be in town, almost as soon as this reaches you, and, till then, I defer saying any thing on that extensive field Davenport's failure has open'd to both.—You a philosopher! No my dear, my beloved Sophia, we need but look on those eyes, which are most truly the visible soul, to be assur'd yours is alive to the most poignant emotions; I should not love you, if it was not, nor esteem you if you did not know how to conquer them.—Lord Melrofs has again written, to press our visit,—He mentions Davenport.—And
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in a subsequent paragraph, adds, "your presence is more than desirable, it is *necessary* to me; and not only yours, but Lady Helen's: when we meet, I will explain my meaning." As he speaks fully on the subject of Lady Melrofs in the conclusion of the letter, this cannot allude to her. To whom indeed should it, but to one who deservedly engrosses half his thoughts. Do not however, let your pride, or your delicacy take the alarm; I mention the circumstance, only to assure you, that he takes a tender interest in every event of your life. He shall have no more than an interest, depend upon it; and I would not forgive him for having less. And so Lady Melrofs and my sister-in-law are great friends!—I knew not till lately to whom the papers alluded by Lady S—. Half of Mr. Nugent's business in town, will be to settle the legacy we have acquir'd by our late misfortune; an acquisition indeed, with which

which my brother is so much discontented, as well as with that left Lady Melrofs, that I know not what reception we shall meet with from him, but am determin'd to hope the best.

You have heard, I suppose, that Mr. Erskine has appeal'd to the house of peers. — Surely he is mad. Lord Melrofs, will be again tormented with law; for tho' it has been insinuated that a compromise might be effected, he rejected the idea as disgraceful. Is not this romance? The more so, as, I know he would have served Erskine, at the time he believ'd the affair terminated.

I have a thousand things to prepare for our departure, and must therefore bid you adieu.—I intend my boy shall be your guest the chief part of my time, and shall bring him myself, as soon after my
arrival

arrival in London as possible, and if you can find room, and Mr. Obrien good-humour, shall intrude the company of

Your ever affectionate,

HELEN NUGENT.

LET.

LETTER CVIII.

To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen
Nugent.

Grosvenor-Square, March.

WE are once more in London, where I did not intend being for many years. I hope, however, when next I leave it, to carry with me that invaluable friend, who alone could have brought me here. By some mistake in Edward's last to Lord Melross, we arrived a day sooner than we were expected, and consequently found nobody at home. They had dined at Spenser-House, and as it was uncertain what their stay would be, we had no option, but to follow, or send for them; and on this important decision, seemed to depend the whole *étiquette* of our meeting with my brother and sister. By the formality of letting them know we were
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in town, we should demand a visit, which they might not pay duly, or in the manner we wish'd. In surprising them, a confidence and familiarity would be shewn, which might prevent future coldness.—The last choice, was at least the safest; and without debating the point with Mr. Nugent, (in whose learned head, not one of these important nothings had enter'd) I sent a short note, signifying that we should have the pleasure of embracing the whole party in half an hour. We expected Lord Melrofs would have return'd with the messenger, and might indeed have guess'd, from his not doing so, that he had deserted; but without waiting for further invitation than a return of the compliments, we set off. How did the driving once more thro' those gates awaken bitter remembrance!—Happy as I am, in my union with Mr. Nugent, I can never think without regret, that the effecting it was a blot in my life, since it caus'd a
pang

pang, to him from whom I receiv'd it.— On entering the drawing-room, we found Lord and Lady Somerset, my mother, and Lady Melrofs. The sight of so many familiar, and yet formal faces, with the deep mourning in which every one was clad, struck upon my heart; and before I could return their compliments, I burst into tears. Not one, however, seem'd to comprehend the latent cause of them, as they unanimously laid it upon the fatigue of my journey.

“The melancholy event that preceded our last parting,” said Mr. Nugent, breaking the silence which had followed first enquiries, “will I hope excuse this little agitation; since every one present, must sympathize in it.” You would almost have smiled, my dear, tho’ I wept, to see every head shake in unison at this speech, and every eye, ceremoniously cast to the ground, as if to conceal a tear, which none however felt. My brother’s hand remain’d

remain'd suspended in the meditated tune on the table, which was wont to supply every pause in the conversation, and the remaining drops of coffee, were suffer'd to grow cold, as the hearts of those who held them. Oh! how mine sicken'd at the subsequent panegyric.

"We have had a great loss indeed, Mr. Nugent," said my mother, after a pause; "but Heaven's Will must be done. —An excellent husband!"

"The most distinguish'd of my friends!" said Janetta affectedly.

"A fine politician too, upon my soul!" cried Spenser, eagerly, as if afraid somebody would step in first, and leave him nothing to say; as he seem'd to have done by his lady; who made no further progress in her speech, than that of opening her mouth. Mine died away in tears, and Edward made a just and noble eulogium, adding with a tender attention to me, "that it might be better to wave a subject,

subject, he had been to blame in obtruding."

"Perhaps, Mr. Nugent wishes to discuss a more important one," said Spenser, turning to my mother, with an air, half sarcastic.

"More important, my Lord! pardon me for repeating your words," return'd Edward, "I know of none so."

"You have talk'd with Spotswood," (our Lawyer, my dear) "I presume, Sir," said my brother.

"That was not possible my Lord! I have not been half an hour in London; and the calls of interest, are, with me, always subservient to every other."

"A little cream, if you please, Madam!" said Spenser, with a most impertinent carelessness. "James you may go!"

"For Heaven's sake, what is the matter?" cried I, perceiving indignation in the countenances of both, and that those
of

of the whole party indeed, did not seem too harmonious.

“The Will, the Will, my dear!” said Edward, with a peevishness that spoke him much hurt.

“No more repartees pray,” said my wife sister-in-law, playing her fan, “we shall have you quarrel, and frighten us to death.”

“Don’t be alarm’d, Madam,” return’d Spenser, I have no doubt but one friend is as peaceable as the other. Lord Melrofs has *prudence* enough for both.” The sneer with which this was spoken, and the look he cast at Janetta, convinc’d me they had been sparring on this affair of the legacies, before we came in. Her look answer’d his, you may be sure.

“No more *repartées*,” drawl’d she, in a tone, and manner so precisely like Lady Somerset’s, that no muscles could withstand it. My brother who was sufficiently sensible

fible of the ridicule, reddened with anger.

"The advantage of a *witty* wife!" retorted he. "Lord Melrofs may thank me for that!"

"As it was the first time your Lordship had any concern with the talent," replied Janetta, "you will certainly be pardon'd. I will answer for its being the last."

"Your speech to me, my Lord," said Edward, (who had by this time recover'd himself) "is as incomprehensible as many former ones; and I am only satisfied in the certainty that no man breathing can be degraded, by being compar'd with Lord Melrofs."

"I think, Mr. Nugent, you might have had respect enough to let Lord Somerset and Lady Melrofs speak," interrupted my mother,

"Respect, Madam," added Mr. Nugent, in a tone that alarm'd my whole soul.

"Brother!

"Brother! Edward!" I exclaim'd incoherently—"Are you mad? Have you so soon forgotten your melancholy reconciliation?"

"Oh there are remedies for these short memories!" return'd my unfeeling brother, with another sneer.—"*We* have found them admirable;" and again he look'd at Janetta.

"By experience, my Lord?" asked she with a most provoking smile.

"Ask Lord Melrofs! he will tell you, you are indebted to such for a husband."

"Yes, and may be so, for getting rid of him;" said the young Countess, in a tone, which shew'd she had not forgiven the jest upon herself.

"If I am, Madam, *I* shall not make sure of another within a month."——

"Lord Somerset," said Edward, sick of this fine-lady wit, "I am not to be insulted, nor is the name of Lord Melrofs, to be the subject of insipid disquisitions.

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In his absence to reflect upon him thus obliquely, is "——

"The only species of meanness his Lordship would not be guilty of, perhaps, in his presence," added Janetta.

"None but the devil, or a woman," said Spenser, "would dare to have said that;"——

"The wife of Lord Melrofs"——

"The wife of Lord Melrofs," interrupted he, in a transport of passion.——

"Say rather, the beggarly offspring of a beggarly Ensign.—Brought up thro' charity, and married thro' compassion: and now," he added, taking her hand, and surveying her with the bitterest contempt, "because a weak husband ornaments the pretty bauble with diamonds and embroidery, her little head is turn'd with the metamorphosis, and she presumes to talk to her benefactors, of consequence, and titles.—Go child! go, and recollect a little, of that humility, with which you urg'd

me to interfere with this formidable husband, to oblige him to accept your fair hand." And away he flung it. Lady Melrofs seem'd petrified; till a faint *te-he*, from my wise sister, recover'd her.

"And do you dare to insult me too! poor Plaister of Paris, composition of powder, and paint!—Wash off the enamel, lest you crack it with a smile; and let us for once see the outside, as unadorn'd as the in." Tears of passion gush'd out, as she spoke, and the deepest flush disfigur'd her complexion.

"Why you are all mad, I think, tonight," said my mother.—"Spenser, what do you mean by this behaviour?"

"Have I said a word, that is not truth, Madam?"

"Why Janetta, what is the matter with you?"

"Don't talk to me! don't talk to me!" replied she. Then passionately starting up, "The matter, Madam! does the creation

ation produce another man like that before you? A man, do I say? No! If pride, meanness, avarice, and insolence, can make one, let me call him a Devil!" Good God! my dear, what a fiend is passion! hers was little short of phrenzy: her looks, her voice, her air, were hardly human. Unconscious of what she said, or did, there was scarce an excess, to which this delirium did not seem capable of carrying her. I shall never, I think, be transported so far as to passion again, whilst I live; for who shall say where it may stop, when neither prudence, delicacy, or rank, could set bounds to hers? Mr. Nugent, and I, absolutely stared at each other.

"Your Ladyship," said he at length, turning to my mother, has tacitly assented to one circumstance I cannot pass over." "Lord Melrofs, (addressing himself to my brother) is, I dare believe, superi-

or to compulsion of every kind, particularly that alluded to."

"You are deceiv'd, Sir," return'd Spenser, with a mighty self-satisfied air, "your friend *dar'd* not do otherwise than marry."

"And on what do you build that assertion, my Lord?"

"You are not likely to be acquainted with the circumstance, Mr. Nugent. We had a ride together in Hyde-Park. Our conference was a short one. I was not in a pacific humour, or his Lordship in a fighting one; so it ended, as most of these affairs do, in a marriage."

"You astonish me!" replied Edward, after a pause, and his countenance did justice to his words.—"And could you suppose that absurd affair, intimidated Lord Melrofs! believe me, it never excited any thing but a smile"—

"Most heroic Knight-errant!" said Jannetta, "how is it possible to express my gratitude for such extraordinary prowess!
and

and so much superior to exaggeration too! ages to come will celebrate your victories, as the conquer'd did by laughter." She laugh'd with an hysterical sob at the end, that excited at once my fears and my pity.

"You will find sufficient employment for his Lordship's courage, if he has any," said the young Countess.

"You!" return'd Janetta, still alive to her rank, "do you remember to whom you speak, Madam? But it has ever been a question with me, whether your ignorance, or your ill-breeding, were the most to be blam'd, and you are determin'd it shall never be decided."

"For your own sakes Ladies," said Edward, "drop this conversation; nor make another blush for you."

"Sure you have both titles enough," said the Lady Dowager, "without quarrelling about them."

"Let each, before she condemns the other, examine her own heart," said I; unsealing my lips, most unfortunately, tho' the first time for an hour past.

"I shall not find Obrien there, if I do," answer'd the young Lady Somerset, pertly.

"And who will?" return'd Lady Melrofs, fixing her eyes sternly upon the former. Edward's face was in a flame. I never saw him so much agitated with suppressed indignation. My cheeks glow'd.

"Obrien," repeated my brother, with a malicious pleasure; "Obrien! I congratulate your Ladyship on your taste; you are not the only woman, by five-hundred, to whom that gentleman is devoted."

"One of which, has the honor of bearing your title, I believe, my Lord." •

"Obrien, my devoted!" said the silly Lady Somerset, with an eagerness that shew'd she was telling a falsehood, "don't believe

believe her, my Lord, he never told me so in his life; but I can prove"—

"Think well of what you are going to say," interrupted Janetta.—"If but a word injurious to my reputation, tremble for the consequences! I will have a masculine revenge;"—

"Fye, fye! Lady Melrofs!" said I, we have had too much of the masculine already."

"Good Heavens!" return'd she, awakening as from a dream, "how have they expos'd me! or rather, how have I expos'd myself!—I feel you despise me! but to be thus arraign'd, insulted, scorn'd."—And her voice sunk into hysterical sobs, till my mother was alarm'd.

"La! what did we quarrel about?" said Lady Somerset, turning to me, when her late friend was a little recover'd.—When decency, peace, and temper are destroy'd, sigh'd I, how many ask that question? Yet even in the little instance

of soliciting a reconciliation, did this silly woman demonstrate the superiority of an unrepublishing conscience ;. since Janetta, with an understanding so far superior, was not able to forgive, merely because conscious guilt had given way to insult.— And thus ends the everlasting friendship of the two ladies. Lady Melrofs, (tho' drest for a round of visits) went home abruptly, lest her Lord should return to know the reason she did not appear at them ; and escap'd him but by a quarter of an hour. But what a gewgaw, a glittering deception does she appear ! I thought, I should not pity her, but I was deceiv'd. Who that sees her in public, blazing in diamonds, and surrounded by flatterers, can suspect, that far from being happy, her heart is a prey to distrust, and remorse. That it is in the power of a fool, like the young Lady Somerset, to stretch her upon the rack of terror, and of my brother, to wound her pride even to agony ;

ny ; that she is in short, a meteor abroad, and a despis'd, insulted, miserable victim at home ; to whom, the present affords nothing but pain, and the future nothing but despair. Since secrets like hers, it is sufficiently obvious, can never remain long such, and she feels herself hourly approaching a precipice, she can only foresee without being able to prevent. Yet had she been innocent, she had really been the gay and happy creature she appears.

Her passion had however, one favorable consequence, in silencing Edward, and my brother. I had a long conversation with the former about the insinuations thrown on the courage of Lord Melrofs ; he laugh'd at the idea, and only said, " he hoped Lord Somers set would have prudence enough not to spread the fame of his valor too far, lest it should receive a check, not of the pleasiest nature. One further observation struck him,

which, I fear, is but too true.—My mother, certainly knows the shocking secret we are at so much pains to conceal.—Nay, I fear, it is still further spread.—What was it Lady Somerset “could prove?”—Till we meet, however, I shall quit the subject. May I come on Tuesday? I have much to say to you, and assure yourself, if Mr. Obrien is tolerably civil to me, I will exert myself towards him. You must be separated, and the present crisis, is, I hope, a favourable one.

Mr. Nugent and Lord Melrofs, join in every kind and respectful remembrance, with,

Your affectionate,

HELEN NUGENT.

L E T-

LETTER CIX.

To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen
Nugent.

March.

I Write a few lines to apologize for not attending you till Wednesday. All is peace once more. Lord Melrofs has awed, or won every party to silence. He is the idol of the young Countess, in spite of my brother, who with a fine estate, is nearly as poor, as when he was simply Lord Spenser; and hates every body mention'd in the Will. We meet on Tuesday at Spenser-House, where Lord Melrofs will be the only one who will not act the hypocrite. Edward and I are just come from thence! we have return'd a morning visit, and carried little Herbert with us.—May my smiling boy be the pledge of peace in his family. He ran to his father

on entering the room, and clung round his neck; nor would he be persuaded to shew his face for some time, after which raising it gently, he look'd round for a moment over Edward's shoulder, till he fixt on Spenser, and smiling at him, buried his head again in his father's bosom. My brother was much pleas'd with this token of distinction, which was owing I believe to his resemblance to me. He pull'd out the rings of his hair, whilst the saucy rogue seconded him by rubbing them over his face, and then laugh'd, till the polish'd rosy cheek shone again. I am very vain, all the gentlemen are fond of my boy, and that we know is no small compliment.

I had a conversation with Lord Melrofs about you. His heart is deeply in this affair of Davenport. He ask'd me a million of questions, which I answer'd as

I pleas'd.——Oh, what might not Janetta have made of him; if his heart avows another attachment, it is her own fault; for he has struggled hard to subdue it, and not without the same degree of success with yourself. That is to say, a success which it depends on circumstances to fix.—Till Wednesday adieu.

H. NUGENT.

LET.

L E T T E R CX.

*To Lady Helen Nugent, Winbrook—From Mr.
Nugent.*

Grosvenor-Square, April.

Written in the Envelope.

SHOULD this reach you in the presence of Mrs. Obrien, find some pretence for withdrawing, before you read the enclos'd.

* * * * *

THE lines written in the cover, will but too much prepare you for every thing that is to follow. Lord Melrofs is no longer a stranger to that detestable secret we have endeavor'd to conceal.—An accident at once simple, and singular, has

has put into his hands the most indubitable proofs of her falsehood. He has felt every thing short of phrenzy, and his indignation only suffers a short suppression, from his ignorance of the villain who has wrong'd him.—That secret is still ours, and I have endeavour'd to make it impenetrable. Go instantly to Stanton-Audley, and enjoin an absolute silence on the Lady Dowager Somerset; it is not likely Lord Melrofs should apply to the young Countess, and from those only have we any thing to fear. I am to follow him this instant to Mount-Herbert, whence I will write to you fully.—Adieu, be cautious, for his life is at stake.

EDWARD NUGENT.

L E T.

L E T T E R CXI.

*To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Lady Helen
Nugent.*

Stanton-Audley.

I Am half dead with terror and doubt.
After escaping from Mrs. Obrien,
without exciting even a suspicion, I un-
fortunately arriv'd here two hours after
my mother was gone to town. I dis-
patch'd Peter with a note instantly, but
in vain; she was not to be found, and I
fear, is by this time with you.

By what strange means can this have
been discover'd! or how is it possible O-
brien's name should be long conceal'd!
Will not Lord Melrofs extort it from *her*
at least, should we silence every other in-
former! perhaps even at this moment—

Good

INNOCENCE.

41

Good Heavens! I am all anguish and dread. Write instantly, and tell me whether I ought to come to you or remain here.

Yours ever,

HELEN NUGENT.

L E T.

LETTER CXII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mr. Nugent.

Mount-Herbert, April.

THE few hasty lines I dispatch'd to you from Grosvenor-Square, have, I hope, reach'd you, without alarming Mrs. Obrien. I feel for your impatience, and tho' I yet tremble for the consequences of this unfortunate scene of guilt, can no longer delay giving you the particulars of the discovery.

On the morning of the day I wrote to you, Lord Melrofs and I, had been riding, till the weather suddenly becoming stormy, we return'd a full hour sooner than usual. The carriage stood at the door with Lady Melrofs, with whom we had a moment's conversation at the window. —He ask'd her in the course of it, where
she

she was going. To this, she return'd, some evasive answer, which with the perturbation of her whole air, gave me the strongest suspicion of an assignation. Without noticing it, he requested his pocket-book, having given it her before he went out, on account of its containing some notes and papers of value. The involuntary steadiness of my eye, suffus'd her cheek, with a glow that confirmed all my fears; and delaying to follow him in, I drew nearer the carriage, and repeated in a low, but distinct voice, the word "remember," she look'd at me without answering, but turn'd pale, and, with a guilty hesitation, said, "she would not go out to-day." The servant instantly open'd the door, and I led her into the great parlor; but for the remainder of the scene, all description must fail.—The chance examination of a moment, had discover'd to Lord Melross she had given him

him a wrong pocket-book, and the first papers that struck him were those I enclose. The hand fortunately was disguis'd.—Obrien writes a fine one, and these are scrawls, he must have design'd should never rise up in judgment against him.—But the art, the guilt, the infamy, were all indubitable. The florid complexion of Lord Melross, was chang'd to so deadly a paleness, as render'd me speechless; but the inarticulate sentence utter'd by his Lady, brought back his whole soul in one glow to his cheek, and gave words to that powerful emotion; which has made him another being from the preceding hour. He had yet command enough of himself, to bid her leave the room; but starting up a moment after, exclaim'd, "she would escape," and rush'd into the hall.—He was right; for she was already in the carriage.—And the footmen, with faces of busy curiosity, all in waiting.—"Drive to Mount-Herbert," said he, casting his
eyes

eyes round, and endeavouring to collect himself; but with a tone and air that petrified his hearers.—“Nugent, you will follow me!” the coachman instantly obey’d orders so unusually authoritative, and, without waiting for his own horses, Lord Melrofs gallop’d after, on one of the servants. I stay’d but to collect the papers his emotion had made him forget, and scribbling a few lines to you, pursued, and overtook him, as he voluntarily kept the carriage in sight. My society was a welcome relief; for his soul was oppress’d with its own tumults.

“The name! the name,” of her seducer, was the grand object to which every passion turn’d. He regretted the leaving the letters, of which he had read but one, and confess’d he did not know the hand; but was somewhat surpris’d on my pretending, that in my eagerness to follow him, I had left them lock’d up in Grosvenor-Square,

venor-Square. The idea of obliging her to avow the secret, however, consoled him for the oversight; nor did I attempt then to argue against that vindictive spirit, which I saw defied all controul.

“For her,” said he, as we drew near Mount-Herbert, I have form’d my determination; “to see her, in the present situation of my mind, would be but too dangerous an experiment. A circumstance on which reflection is little less than madness, effectually forbids it. And what is a divorce?—A reward for licentiousness, that only confirms *my* infamy, and leaves her free to encrease her own.—Of that, however, we will talk further. For the present, a bitterer mortification attends her. Let the vanity and folly that have undone her, become her curse!—From this moment, she bids adieu to every indulgence of either. No jewels, no fattins! no gaudy ornaments, under which the

the deformity of vice is conceal'd ! I will make her a Magdalen in form, if not in heart ; since I will withdraw nothing necessary to virtue, and leave nothing desirable to vice."

I now, by his desire, rode on, and saw her alight. She look'd pale. I ask'd her how she did—she said "dying;" and desir'd she might instantly be carried to her apartment. Of death, however, I saw no signs, tho' I did not contradict the accounts she sent Lord Melrofs, and, as her situation gave colour to the illness, I readily suffer'd them to deceive him. His agitation, by degrees subsided, into a calm determination of revenging himself the moment it was possible to bring her to a confession. He wrote her a short note to urge it, which she thought proper to answer by another assurance she was dying, and every thing now remains suspended till she chuses to retract from that assertion.

assertion. To-morrow must be productive of some event; but as every hour will contribute towards rendering him more cool, the favourable chances are at least stronger from the delay. He spoke once of Obrien, but she mov'd in too extended a sphere, to enable even a husband (especially after so long an absence) to guess at her connexions.

* * * * *

Yours is this moment brought me.—
 What can have engaged Lady Somerset?
 Do not, however, come. Stanton-Audley
 is, I think, your only proper retreat.—
 For should Lord Melrose once discover
 the villain, a duel will be the inevitable
 consequence, and that instantly. Your
 relationship to one, and your residence
 under the roof of the other, would be
 incongruities, the world would justly cen-
 sure, both in you and Mrs. Obrien. Do
 not

not think of Mount-Herbert. Scenes of this nature, are ill-calculated for you ; be careful of the letters enclos'd.—I send them by a faithful hand. Lord Melrofs has yet seen only the second.

Your affectionate,

EDWARD NUGENT,

* * * * *

Letters enclos'd in the above.

L E T T E R I.

To Miss Sutherland.

NEVER was the Hesperian tree half so valuable, or so faithfully guarded, as the most adorable of her sex, by that old hag, Lady S——. I have sought in vain,
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for an opportunity to repeat my assurances of tenderness and gratitude. Let her Ladyship, however, beware! Watchfulness itself was there an insufficient protection against art; and shall love be less ingenious? How I pity a world yet ignorant of its misfortune!—That precious fruit was capable of sowing discord even amongst immortals, what then ought not to be the fears of an earthly generation from this.

Think how I languish under so tedious a constraint; it is now near a fortnight since you went to Spenser-House, and I have haunted it in vain. Surrounded by a troublesome world, those charms which would make a Paradise of the meanest retreat, were love presided, are become my misfortune. Be less lovely, if you would have me live! I cannot bear to have a universe of rivals!—Grant me one line, to tell me when I may have a chance

chance of pouring out at your feet, that inexhaustible adoration, which no time can lessen, and nothing but death extinguish.

LETTER II.

To the Right Hon. Lady Melrofs.

THOU dear capricious trifler, how often am I to complain of my disappointments! twice within a month, and no husband within three hundred miles to intervene!—You are an absolute heretic in love, and I could almost find in my heart to condemn you to perish in its flames, but that your pile would be more famous than those of the Indians, by the self-devoted victims who would attend it.—I allow you to be offended by the reports that have circulated; it is an indisputable grant in all ages, that our sex is to be inconstant, and yours to complain.—Tho' if I did not fear your resentment,

I should add, that the latter privilege is often the only real distinction between us.

It is true, I was confoundedly in the dismals the other night. I must have been so, when you could not revive me. However, thanks be to matrimony, Lady S— no longer is the same spy to Lady M—, she was to Miss Sutherland.—And your assistance has once more settled my derangements. Think that I wait with impatience for a meeting, and am in the interim

Ever yours

L E T T E R III. -

To Lady Melrofs.

HOW often am I to tell you, that your doubts are absurd, and your scruples wearisome!—Can I play my cards alone, think you, Madam? or struggle to preserve

serve your reputation, whilst you do not reserve a shilling from your own extravagancies to indulge mine?—"After the discovery of the morning," you say, "you have nothing left to hope, but an elopement or a divorce"—these you call *hopes*—I think, I could have found a juster term for them.—But art thou really so pretty an idiot in the ways of this wicked world, as to suppose Lady Somerset, inexorable!—What, rouge, wear brown powder, and lylac ribbons at fifty, yet want a fellow feeling for the little errors inspir'd by *la belle passion*.—Who are to be its dupes, but the weak, the vain, and the dissipated: and what so justly marks the frivolous inside, as the frivolous out. We may be deceiv'd in our judgment on these symbols, but the chances are ten to one in our favour, as I proved, when I this morning made the hall of Spenser-House, resound with my formidable rap.—The obsequious door turn'd on its hinges, the

more obsequious footman on his heel, and display'd instantaneously, the august personage of his Lady! her portly figure, more portly than before, every frill erect, and the very sack, as conscious of its dignity, stiffening as she spoke.—Our conference was, for several moments, not of the most ceremonious, or gentle nature—well said the poet,

“ The honour of a prude, is rage and storm,

“ 'Tis ugliness, in its most frightful form :

“ Fiercely it stands, defying Gods—but not *men*.”

There, he was a poet indeed ; and wander'd into the regions of fiction.—In my softest, sweetest tone, did I reply to the rais'd voice, and keen reproaches of the angry Dowager ;—my eye sedulously pursued hers ;—my hand sought that fair one, which, of the two, seem'd more inclined to salute my ear.—In short, I sooth'd, flatter'd, won over her vanity,
and

and with that grand ally, found no difficulty in subduing her reason. She loved the world too well, to disavow its right to sanctify the errors it caus'd, and became at length a tacit convert, to the opinion, that there was no crime, but in being discover'd. Thus then, your fears of her betraying us, for awhile at least, are silenc'd.—I will not swear, that they are so forever.—Chance, is the goddess that directs half the events of this life, and the chief advantage attending the sober fools of it, is, that they regulate their own destiny, whilst we are content to be the slaves of the moment.

As to your fears with regard to his return, of what consequence is it to me, but for your sake? *I* fear him not: do you therefore look to the rest. The letters I cannot restore, unless for value received. That which cost you so much mortification, it is impossible to obtain;

but for their own sakes, and his amiable Lordship's they will be as glad to conceal it, as you can: for they know, I dare fight, and a brace of pistols is the worst of the business.

As to your not being able to raise the money, it is a jest: effect that, and the letters are yours. I cannot do without it; especially after this last crash. We read of a king, indeed, who had power to turn every thing into gold; but modern customs just reverse the matter, and turn gold into every thing. Name your time for our meeting, I will come if I can, but don't care to promise any thing.

L E T T E R IV.

To Lady Melrofs.

YOU trifle with me in instances where both my honor and my life are concerned.

ed. The jewels you sent me, you knew, were not equivalent to half my demand. As to my wife, I have told you, she has none left.—Yet I must have money; or I am undone; and you are sensible, I am not of a humour to be so alone. My honor was engag'd for the sum lost on Sunday.— And I know the fellow to be desperate. I can do nothing in the way we mentioned, unless I intend to secure myself a halter. And N——, (a dirty old codger) disappointed in his schemes upon my over-virtuous wife, treats me with formal bows from a splendid equipage.

I will have no more shuffles, Madam! —The world is valued by the wise, only as it is subservient to them. I can menace, when I cease to persuade; but remember, I act, the moment I cease to menace.

LETTER CXIII.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs.
Obrien.*

Winbrook.

ALL, I find, is discover'd at Mount-Herbert. Hasten my dear friend, to inform me of the particulars, but do not come to me at present; as that brute, Obrien, may be here. I have been very miserable ever since I receiv'd the intelligence, and beg you will inform me minutely of all that passes. How does my sweet little Herbert? Pray remember me to him. Excuse this hasty scrawl, as I have been very ill with this discovery.

I am, my dear Lady Helen,

Your ever Affectionate,

S. OBRIEN.

LETTER CXIV.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mr.
Nugent.*

Mount-Herbert, April.

TO-DAY has been, as I prognosticated, a scene of tumult, anxiety, and doubt. The physician declar'd Lady Melrofs in no danger; and it was signified to her, that she must either see me, or her Lord. She desir'd Lady Somerset might be sent for: she would admit, she said, nobody else. This produc'd so determin'd a note from Lord Melrofs, that she consented to rise, and call'd for her cloaths; but her astonishment on seeing those allotted her, was only to be equal'd by her resentment: she gave way to the most extravagant fits of it. Threaten'd the women who attended her, with the bitterest punishments, and vow'd she would

expire with weakness in bed, rather than wear such a hideous disguise. This wise resolution she held for some hours, till her fears overcoming her pride, she assum'd a different character.—Grew quite diverted at the jest; and arraying herself, with much mock humility, call'd for a looking-glass. Here, however, all her effrontery fail'd; the sight was not to be endur'd; the mirror dropt, the lady fainted, and the *comedy* was at an end.

My introduction, however, was not so immediate as the impatience of Lord Melrofs induc'd him to wish.—For before it could take place, a carriage drove up to the door;

“It is Lady Somerset,” said his Lordship, looking thro’ the sash, “let me request you will meet her; she comes to satisfy herself, on a subject which has, no doubt, circulated half over London.—My soul is yet too indignant to speak upon
on

on it, with one, who, if she is not an accomplice, can be but little better, since she was Janetta's only guard, and constant companion. If you can draw from her any insight as to the name of the villain who has wrong'd me, I depend upon your friendship; if not, she cannot be gone too soon.—For a weak head, and a haughty heart, are what I can rarely contend with, in my calmest moments." He had scarce retir'd thro' one door, when her Ladyship caught a glance of him, as she swept in at the other.

"Your servant, Mr. Nugent," with a most consequential courtesy.—"Where is Lord Melross gone, pray?"

"At present, Madam, he is engaged."

"And what engagements should prevent his seeing me, Sir?"

"That must be explain'd to your Ladyship hereafter!—Allow me the honour of leading you into the drawing-room."

"I

"I shall take a dish of chocolate with my niece, Sir, till your consequential friend chuses to see me."

"Your Ladyship will command what refreshments you think proper, but the company of Lady Melrofs, you must, for the present, I fear, dispense with."

"And why so, Sir?"

"Have no reports reach'd you, Madam, that may spare me the explanation?"

"As to reports, Sir, I know nothing that should prevent Lady Melrofs from attending *me*."

"Then, Madam, I must, unwillingly tell you, that his Lordship thinks one apartment, at present, a sufficient indulgence for her."

"Why surely she is not confined?" I assented. "A fine thing indeed! a woman of rank, and fortune, confined in her own house! what will this world come to!" and she paus'd at this wise ejaculation. "On suppositions too! on mere doubts!"

doubts!" (and are you then so well inform'd, Lady Somerset? thought I!)—
"However, I am gone, Sir! so tell your friend, I am not come, to be his prisoner also. You may add, however, that his next visitor," and she rais'd her voice maliciously, "will be seen as well as heard;" and off she floated, with all the dignity of Scotland in her features. I went to Lord Melrofs, and requested he would permit her to be present at the conversation with his Lady, to which he assented.

I found the Dowager in the parlour, fanning herself most outrageously, tho' there was a storm both of hail and snow, to which last, her complexion bore no resemblance.

"Well Sir! quite the *maggiordomo*, I see! a fine house! noble gardens!—Pray how long have you come into possession?"

"Your

"Your Ladyship is pleasant! (and faith I never wrong'd my conscience more) "I have once more intruded upon you, in order to clear up an error, which may materially affect your opinion of Lady Melrofs. The behaviour of his Lordship, is not built upon suppositions, he has proofs" —

"What are the proofs, Sir? Mr. O'Brien" — she stopt with conscious guilt.

"If you wish to prevent the most fatal extremities, Madam, suffer not that name to pass your lips."

"What are his proofs, Sir?"

"They are letters."

"Am I mention'd in them, Mr. Nugent?" I assented; she was visibly flutter'd.

"Imprudent, foolish fellow! to dare to expose my name!"

"Give me leave to observe, Madam, that the imprudence was not all on his side."

"It's

"It's very true," replied she, biting the top of her fan. But not in the least applying my reflections to herself, but solely to her niece. "If his Lordship has proofs—that is—proofs—proofs, that will prove, I cannot but own he has some cause of complaint."

"Some cause," replied I, warmly.—
"Great cause, Madam. Unfortunately, the greatest, man can have, to induce him to expose a woman that has disgrac'd him."

"Sir! Sir!" and she walk'd about fanning herself, "she is my niece!"

"I am sorry for it, Madam!"

"And you are my son-in-law!" I was silent.

"But cannot I see either, Sir? This is a strange mode of behaviour;—"

"I will deal frankly with you, Madam. —You *may* see both, if on further reflection, you continue to wish it. Lord Melrofs does not yet know the name of the
villain

villain who has wrong'd him. Whether, when interrogated, your Ladyship can plead equal ignorance, I leave to your own bosom to determine." She was dumb. — "From Lady Melrofs, he has enjoin'd me to extort the secret, which I already know but too well. In half an hour I am to see her, and you have only to desire to accompany me, to assure yourself of my obedience."

"Well, Mr. Nugent, since it is so— why I think, we must compound matters as well as we can. I was guilty of a blunder, to be sure, in entering into this silly business;— but where the honor of a family is concern'd, one is tempted to go further to save it, than is strictly right." This is her Ladyship's way of saving honor, my dear. "But tell me, candidly, whether you think Lord Melrofs, might not be prevail'd upon to overlook"—

"Never, Madam;" return'd I more warmly still. "He is ignorant of those contemptible

contemptible weakneſſes, inſtituted by depravity, and authoriz'd by cuſtom, which convert adultery into gallantry, and degrade our ſpecies, by confounding all diſtinctions of virtue, and vice; and leaves it to thoſe frivolous beings, who have no other means of attaching, to borrow the ſhameful one of convenience." I then laid before her, his determinations with regard to Janetta, and the immediate danger that would attend his diſcovering Obrien.

She was alarm'd at the idea of being expos'd as a party in the affair, and repeatedly requeſted to know, if I thought his Lordſhip "*really* in earneſt." To this I answer'd in the affirmative, and gave her an account of that violence of temper, and indifpoſition, which whether feign'd, or otherwiſe, on the part of Lady Melroſs, had induc'd him to defer the meeting. Like moſt angry people, ſhe grew cowardly,

cowardly, in proportion as she cool'd; and desired I would see her niece first. I comply'd, and sent up my compliments; but this produc'd a curious debate. Can you believe, that the weak woman, in the midst of guilt and shame, was chiefly shock'd on account of her dress. At first she absolutely protested, she would not see me at all. Then it must be in the dark; then in bed—then, in short, the strangest vagaries in the world, possess her; and nothing but the certainty of my being admitted by surprise, in case of a refusal, could have extorted her consent. At length, I was allow'd to enter. The window-shutters were half clos'd, and the curtains so low, that it was a mere twilight. She sat by the fire, leaning on her hand. I bow'd on my entrance, but the lady kept her seat, with the dignity of a heroine of romance.

“ Good day, Mr. Nugent!” with a slight inclination of the head. “ This visit

fit is quite ill-tim'd, and perhaps not altogether desirable; but I shall be glad to understand, whether you come as a friend or an enemy."

"Lord Melrofs, Madam, has requested me"—

"I won't have him nam'd to me, Sir," interrupted she, passionately starting up, but casting her eyes on her dress, she instantly sat down again. "I abhor his very idea!—Was ever woman us'd as I have been! to confine me! to take away my cloaths! and not content, even with that, oblige me to wear these despicable ensigns of indigence, and disgrace!—You, Sir, I suppose, are obsequiously come to lecture his victim, but I will rather die, than be thus expos'd."

"Die! Madam!" repeated I, struck with inexpressible disgust. "What, because you wear a commoner gown, or a coarser cap! I am sorry for you, indeed, since
perverted

perverted shame, is the most dangerous of all errors. When I enter'd, it was with an idea of delicacy, and respect, your reception, give me leave to add, has but ill justified. If you think you can collect yourself, I have somewhat to offer on the part of Lord Melrofs, which may deserve your attention; if otherwise, our conversation may as well end here, for I have not authority to answer these phrenzical starts of passion."

"And who, Sir, situated as I am, can avoid being frantic?"

"Do not confound the effect with the cause, Madam. Had you earlier curb'd this unfortunate impetuosity, you had never experienc'd a trial, so severe as the present. And, (tho' the observation, will probably incur your resentment) I cannot avoid adding, that she who really struggles to govern her heart, rarely permits so unbounded an indulgence to her temper."

"And

"And how dare Lord Melrofs use me thus, Sir? Am I not his equal?"

"Compel me not, Madam, to answers, that would shock and offend you."

"Oh, Sir, not to do that, would be to defeat the chief purport of your commission.—To be made a slave, where I have a right to command."

"And from whom, Madam, was that right derived?"

"I care not, Sir! it is enough that I possess it; if from Lord Melrofs, is this an apartment for his wife? Are these wretched garments, suited to his rank, or mine?"

"No, Madam! but however harsh the truth, they are certainly suited to her who has betray'd both. The wildness of your accusations, has extorted from the sincerity of my nature, such returns, as politeness will but ill excuse. But why this absurd grief, on an article so unimportant? Is it not the mind that dignifies the garment?"

ment? And will you not be one day too happy, if, in return for these ornaments now withdrawn, you regain that peace, and purity, which alone can give them lustre. Each rank of life has its separate duties; and when you recollect, that yours have been neglected, you must surely hold yourself a debtor to Providence, in allowing you still to enjoy a thousand advantages resulting from the fulfilling those duties in others. The laborious hand, Madam, that rais'd an apartment so despicable in your eyes, sought perhaps, a suspension from its labors upon straw; and those labours were suspended, because the consciousness of having discharg'd the humble duties of penury, left no void, or regret upon the soul. Yet tho' still shelter'd, and cloath'd, by the efforts of those incidental virtues, you abjur'd, you dare to murmur!—Let the humiliating parallel, render you more grateful;

ful; it will be the first step towards rendering you more happy."

"Your notions of happiness, Sir," return'd she, "seem at least conformable to your rank. You must not therefore be surpris'd, if mine have not the *honor* to resemble them; since perhaps the menial habits of servitude, are no longer painful, where they are familiar."

"Indeed, Madam!" I replied coldly, "I wish it may prove so!—Since, however, you seem so perfectly satisfied as to the justice of your own opinions, will you give me leave to try, which of us can convert the other. Nor need I fear, any one will accuse me of having allotted myself the easiest task."

"I am no disputant, Sir! nor shall I enter the lists, with so learned a gentleman as Mr. Nugent!"

"The learning necessary for such an enquiry, Madam, as it is deriv'd from the heart, you will probably have the advant-

age in. Happiness has been the grand object of your pursuit thro' life. Will your Ladyship condescend to inform me, in what circle of pleasure you discovered it."

"You know I cannot, Sir," said she, sullenly.

"I will assist your memory, Madam.—Perhaps it was in dress." I paus'd. She shook her head with disdain: "perhaps in flattery." Again I paus'd and receiv'd the same silent answer. "Perhaps in dissipation." She sigh'd a heart-drawn negative. "Perhaps, Madam, in less justifiable pursuits."

"Sir!" said she, dropping her hand, and looking towards me with an angry contempt.

"The exquisite delicacy, which startles at the name of vice, Lady Melrofs, cannot, with justice, be allow'd to any, but an unsullied mind; and to such, our sex pay the noblest deference, that of imbibing

ing their purity." Her features swell'd with a passion that denied her the power of utterance; she sat down, and rose repeatedly ten times in a minute, glancing her eye on every thing round the room, but me, as if to spend in looks, that rage she knew not otherwise how to express.

"Your silence, your emotion, Madam, are a sufficient negative;" added I. "If then you neither found happiness in dress, flattery, or dissipation,—if those erroneous attachments which first seduc'd your duty from God, and your husband, have produc'd only past disgust, and present regret,—if you have vainly sought for happiness in every thing but yourself, why not have recourse to that last trial? Why so bitterly regret the privation of enjoyments, which never constituted your felicity? You cannot fly from remorse, and yet you voluntarily abjure the sweets that crown repentance."——

"Give me air! give me words," cried she, eagerly starting up. "I perceive, I am to be destroy'd by your insults, and it is no matter how soon. I am already lost to, abandon'd by, annihilated to the world; Oh God, that I were so indeed! nor shall it be long, before I am. Go, Sir, and tell my Lord, he has nothing to fear, either from my crimes, or my reproaches. My fate is determin'd. There was a time, (and short are the years that have elaps'd since,) when fate itself, could hardly controul my desires; but it has done more; it has shewn me their impotence, in their gratification; and left me nothing to desire." The deep and broken tone, in which this was pronounc'd, the frantic energy of her countenance, with the settled despair that seem'd collected in her eyes, lately burning with fury, and, above all, the dreadful portrait she had drawn of her own mind, now really touch'd me.

"And

“ And thus, Madam,” continued I, with a tone of tenderness, “ by a series of follies, and crimes, has a young and beautiful woman, been induc’d to think even of suicide. And that, to avoid no punishment but conscience ; since still in a situation, to which virtue might have given happiness, and resignation, dignity. Do not, however, give way to despair. Life, Madam, like gold, is only valuable as it is used ; when lavishly squander’d, it is apt to purchase only cares to the possessor ; but when nobly spent, the means of happiness, both to ourselves, and others.”

“ Would I *could* think like you,” said she, sighing ; “ but I have not feelings, I have not reflection ; I am a different being. I have none of these refin’d, mental pursuits.”

“ Beware, Madam,” said I, “ of the worst of all errors ; a false humility, is too often fatal ; since it is putting the

garb of virtue, on a dangerous lassitude of soul; some author says,

“ His nature, no man can o’er-rate, and none,

“ Can under-rate, his merit.”——

The bounds of possibility, tho’ the enquiry of all ages, have never yet been determin’d by any. And were we allow’d to despair, man might with equal propriety, mingle with quadrupeds, thro’ the fear of not being able to poise himself upright.— Hope, is the blessing least circumscrib’d to the human mind, because it is that which gives birth to every other;”——

“ Do you then really think, I have any thing to hope ?” interrupted she, eagerly.

“ Every thing, Madam !” return’d I, not imagining she had in view, any pardon, but from Heaven ; “ a sincere penitence, can never be rejected. Submit with resignation, reflect seriously upon the past, guard

guard against the future, and look forward to many happy days of innocence."

"You restore me to new life," cried she, with eyes sparkling thro' the beamy moisture. "Now you are indeed my friend, Mr. Nugent!" She paused; but exultation, and vanity, mounted in crimson floods to her cheek; and I saw the gay, and imperious Lady Melrofs burst thro' the degradations, which for awhile had obscur'd her. "If my Lord," continued she, "should one day generously condescend to pardon and forget my errors, he should find my gratitude proportioned to his kindness, and that my heart has never been another's."

Before I could utter a reply, my looks had anticipated, Lady Somerset swept in, with an air at once angry and confus'd; the scene that followed, was too absurd, too ridiculous, to be describ'd; unwilling to side openly with her niece, (thro' the fear of being involv'd with her,) and not

able to make her understand, that she dissimulated, but to serve her, Lady Somerset's perplexity rose to its highest pitch; and Lady Melross, eager to gratify the spleen she had so long suppressed, on the only object in her power, obstinately shut her eyes to every motive of prudence.— A grand quarrel soon ensued; and such a quarrel, as defies description. It was a female one indeed. Their age, their persons, their follies, nay, their very vices, were alternately ridiculed, and exposed, with the bitterest malevolence. A thousand little mean arts, a thousand meaner wishes unknown to the world, were betray'd by the keenness of reproach, and the grey hairs of Lady Somerset were derided, as the coverings of a depravity, which excited at once, my astonishment, and pity. A momentary pause (during which, their rage seem'd suspended) first reminded them it had a witness. A dreary silence

lence succeeded ; whilst the eyes of each, alternately wander'd from the other, to me, as if unwilling to appropriate the reproach of having betray'd herself. Floods of tears were the consequence, and they parted with mutual indignation. Lady Somerset did me the honor of accepting my hand to her carriage, which still waited, and instantly stepped into it. It had hardly drove from the door, when Lord Melrose met me in the hall ; his air, was fiery, and impatient ; in short, I perceiv'd there was no option, but to give up the name of Obrien, when Sir George Irwin, by galloping up, for a moment suspended the explanation...

Peter has brought me yours,* and as the length of this has already exceeded the bounds of moderation, I fend it off

E 5

and

[*Omitted.]

and defer the remainder till my next.—
Take no side in the affair, with your mother, who is, perhaps, by this time with you; and assure yourself, of having all further particulars, very shortly, from

Your ever faithful, and affectionate,

EDWARD NUGENT.

L E T.

LETTER CXV.

To Mrs. O'Brien.—From Lady Helen
Nugent.

Stanton-Audley, April.

YOUR note, my dear friend, I received with an astonishment, and terror, on finding you appriz'd of the discovery at Mount-Herbert, that were only abated by the calm manner which you have endeavour'd to assume; tho' much, I fear, from the strength of your expression with regard to O'Brien, that he has given you additional cause of vexation. I wrote instantly to Edward, for the particulars of all that was passing at Mount-Herbert, and send you his answer, as I receiv'd it; having indeed, hardly had time for the perusal. How will your heart be wrung, by the dread of that cruel event, it seems to prepare us for?—Yet if reason or persuasion,

suasion, can engage Lord Melrofs to be calm, we may depend on Mr. Nugent.—Prepare yourself, however, for the worst; that worst, to which the constitutional horrors of our sex, add pangs, perhaps, almost as exquisite, as can arise from its sensibilities.—Let me hear from you; and call up, I intreat, those principles which have hitherto been your ornament, and support.—Adieu, my beloved friend.

H. NUGENT.

L E T.

LETTER CXVI.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs.
Obrien.*

Winbrook, April.

THOU' much surpris'd at not receiving a line from you, after your abrupt departure, I cannot, my dearest friend, defer, the account of an adventure, more singular, and ridiculous, than ever before fell within my knowledge; and I could almost persuade myself, that sylphs, fairies, or some aerial beings, must have assisted, in a transformation so ludicrous. Laugh no longer at the scenes of romance! I defy it to match reality; nor did I ever read an adventure, avowedly fabulous, that could not be countenanced, by a survey of that more wonderful volume, human life. Could you but have one single glance at my little coif, ruffet gown, and
unadorn'd

unadorn'd apartment, you would be tempted, like me, to distrust the evidence of your senses. Let me (for the twentieth time) convince myself, I do not dream. No! it is certainly so; the thick lawn does not fade imperceptibly into transparent gauze; nor can all my self-persuasion, convert the honest labours of some industrious house-wife, into the more splendid productions of the loom. And now, since (*vice versa* to the common mode,) the butterfly has commenced grub, I will proceed to the manner of the metamorphosis.

My usual solitary supper, (that is, my tea,) being over very late yesterday evening, I sat down to read Blair.—I name my author, lest you should suspect him (like that prescrib'd in the *Diable boiteux*) to be the soporific, that took so powerful an effect upon my senses. I never to my knowledge, shut my eyes over a book in my life; now, imagine my surprise, on finding

finding I could not keep them open. I made several ineffectual attempts; walking at intervals about the room, till the desire of sleep got the better even of the absurdity, and affecting to be indispos'd, I went up to my apartment. There, the candles still burning, my hair hanging loose over my shoulders, and in my wrapper, thanks I suppose to laudanum, I fell asleep.—For not one syllable do I remember after, till I was waked by a broad glare of sunshine, which with the help of my watch, inform'd me, it was near eleven in the morning. I open'd my eyes on a scene so extraordinary, as quickly roused every faculty to astonishment: gently rising on one elbow, with as much precaution, as if I thought myself in the tomb of Rosicrusius, where a single motion might involve me in utter darkness, I was contented for some moments to look round in silence. My usual apartment, elegant, tho' not splendid,

did, was converted into a rambling garret, ornamented with a paper which might properly have been taken for the first humble daub ever denominated a picture, by some of Noah's sons, with a representation of the birds and beasts, creeping into the Ark. The furniture consisted of one chair, one table, a monstrous pier-glass, and a rusty grate; which, however, contain'd no fire. My first emotion at the sight, was surprise, and the second, laughter. I started from the bed, on which I had been laid, and began to contemplate the habiliments apparently design'd to adorn my fair person.—These were, a little round cap, a stuff gown, and a common muslin handkerchief, with an apron of the same. Whilst turning them over, (rubbing my eyes at intervals, to convince myself I was awake,) I heard the door unlock, and in came, (neither sylph, or fairy,) but my evil genius himself, in the shape of Mr. Obrien.

“ Well

"Well my little Pamela!" said he, advancing gayly, "already risen? I hoped to pay you a visit *à la françoise*, this morning! How do you like your new apartment?"

"So well, Sir!" return'd I, collecting my spirits, "that, as you have made a French entrance, I shall not be at all sorry, if you take a French leave."

"Provoking gipsy," return'd he, laughing, "am I always to be so unacceptable! always to meet those frigid eyes, fraught with no other language, than, when shall I be rid of you?"

"If my eyes are frigid," I replied, "I am glad they do so much justice to my feelings; for really considering we are yet but in April, you are not very lavish in your sacrifices to Ignus."

"The girl shall make you a fire," said he casting his eyes on the unwieldy quarry of steel (if I may use such an expression)

sion,) which had pass'd fifty years ago, under the denomination of a grate.

“The sooner then, the better,” added I; “otherwise, she may chance to find an empty chimney; since by the scornful attitude in which your grate stands at present, I shall not be surpris'd, to see it strut off.” This silly speech, which, however, gives some idea of the uncouth manner in which this piece of furniture was plac'd, made him smile again; and saying, he would send the maid, he reliev'd me by departing.— From her I might, justifiably perhaps, have ask'd some explanation, of this scene; from him, I dared not; since I know, by cruel experience, that to smile, when he smiles, is absolutely necessary, except we mean to be torn by the cutting *sang froid* he always opposes to reproach. I contented myself, however, in silence; willing to wait the event for a time at least, and found some amusement in altering my new-fashion'd robes, since I saw, I was
doom'd

doom'd to wear them, if I meant to avoid sarcastic reflections, on my suppos'd mortification. At dinner time he came in from riding.

"Your servant, my dear!" said he, throwing his hat negligently on the table, and himself back in his chair, with an air graceful enough, to those who did not see "Othello's visage, in his mind;" as is, unfortunately the case with your poor friend. "You find I am become quite a domestic man! remember my promises, mind my wife, keep good hours, egad! who knows but I may be a Sir Charles Grandison at last! and that, you know, is a demi-god at least!—What have you done with yourself, since I left you?"

"With *myself* not much," returned I, glancing my eye to the door, (which had been carefully lock'd) for a pretty obvious reason. "As to my employment, I have been at work."

"At

"At work! upon what?" return'd he, angrily looking round, in expectation, I suppose, of seeing some frame.

"It will not be easy for you to determine," I answer'd; "since I have been altering my cloaths."

"Those!"——

"These."

"And don't you think you have thrown away your time?"

"By no means! absolute indolence, is of all things my aversion; and since I had no employment either for my head, or my feet, I thought myself fortunate in finding some for my fingers."

"By Jove," said he, "thou wouldst make the prettiest parish girl, in England, and do more good than half the parsons in it."

"A much less discerning person than you are pleas'd to suppose me, would guess the reason of your thinking so."

"And

"And what may that be, pray?"

"Because you never heard a quarter of them."

"They are playing the very devil at Mount-Herbert," said he, with a half gape.

"At Mount-Herbert!" I repeated involuntarily; but recollecting myself, added, "I thought the family had been in town."

"They are just come down with a party.—And, *à propos*, Lady Helen desir'd me to excuse her not writing; Nugent, and she, are both there. I believe, I should have stay'd to walk a dance or two to night, if Lord Melrofs had not secur'd the only woman worth having."

"His lady, I suppose," said I, with a forced smile. And, in my confusion, insensible to the absurdity I was guilty of.

"Pho! child!" return'd he, "when did you ever hear of a man's dancing with
his

his own wife?" I did not dare to say more; yet my curiosity was strongly excited. The account was probable, tho' strange; and your silence had already fill'd my mind with perplexity. That perplexity, I thought he seem'd to enjoy; for he half clos'd his eyes, as he leant back, and fixt them intently on me.

"Do you go to town this evening?" said I, at last, (only thro' the wish of saying something). "But what have we here?" on perceiving the man enter with a large parcel tied up in paper.

Examine, examine, my dear," returned he, laughing, "you will be vastly edified with your new library." I obey'd; and opening the first book, found it to be a collection of meditations, and penitential prayers.

"You see I am going to make a little Magdalen of you," he added, looking over my shoulder.

"No,"

"No," return'd I, "that cannot be! you may give me the form, but never the feelings of one; which is striving to wound with an edgeless knife; since by furnishing me with the prayers of remorse, and repentance, you do but shew me my happiness, in not greatly needing either."

"Woman to the last!" interrupted he. — "And so my little Cinderilla," ludicrously walking round me, "you would persuade me that your virtue is deified enough to find no mortification in descending from lace and satin, to the humble habiliments of the *canaille*. Look round your apartment, child! who knows but this same force of sentiment may convert paper into damask, and the powerful influence of a garret, bring your soul, as much nearer to the Gods, as your person."

"The force of sentiment," return'd I, "does not consist in elevating our situation to ourselves, but in accomodating ourselves to our situation; and really I should

should be a most unreasonable woman, to be offended with your endeavors at familiarizing me, to the only apartment you intend to leave either of us. I should be glad, however, of an additional indulgence, (for as such, I suppose I am to consider the books,) I mean that of pen and ink."

"No truly!" cried he contemptuously turning on his heel, "I mean to have no more scribbling I assure you; and don't know what the devil your sex is taught it for, except to render mischief hereditary, as well as inherent."

"There are occasions, Sir," replied I, somewhat piqued, "when yours is not the more fortunate for possessing that talent. But now, Mr. Obrien, we will, if you please, have a few moments of serious conversation. And give me leave to demand your reasons for a conduct, which is not the less singular, for my not having hitherto noticed it."

"Serious!

“ Serious! my dear creature, how canst thou make such a demand upon me? Is it possible I should be able to assign a serious cause, for so whimsical an effect? Besides,” leading me with an air of drolery to the glass, “ survey thy own appearance, and tell me, if it is possible Heraclitus himself, could forbear laughing, to see so heroic a soul, dwindled down to so ignoble a disguise?”

“ I do survey myself, Sir,” said I, composing my countenance, (for I could not help smiling, tho’ I was thoroughly angry) “ I am alter’d, but not degraded; for as what you are pleas’d to stile my heroics, did not consist in externals, it is not in your power, however it may be in your will, to withdraw them. Solitude, may be insipid to all, but can only be painful to the guilty; and as my chief sources of pleasure, have been lately confin’d to my own bosom, there is but little you can deprive me of. The mortificati-

ons of the vanity, in a well govern'd mind, are at worst only transient; especially when it is conscious not only of private, but public exculpation, from deserving them: and till you can rob me of the use of my understanding, you can never leave me utterly destitute of amusement. In arbitrarily putting it out of my power to enjoy the blessings of reciprocal friendship, (as I cannot but suppose you have done, Sir, from the silence of Lady Helen,) you have indeed found the last test of my patience. But even that I can sustain; since certain, no authority can prevent my image from being remembered with kindness, or my absence with regret.—Avail yourself then, Mr. O'Brien, of that power, my weak romance, first invested you with. I once made a merit of carrying a virtue to a failing,—you have corrected me for life; and to feel, to think, and act with moderation, has been its great object since. But use your power,

power, Sir, with humanity; I submit to part with luxuries, but I will ever protest against losing my comforts; and as to the trivial difference in my appearance, (situated as I am) I have philosophy enough to contemn, tho' not absurdity enough to desire it."

"And do you say this from your very soul?" said he, after a pause. "Remember I ask you seriously, solemnly!"——

"Seriously, then, I do!"

"Strange! very strange!" he added, rising and walking about the room; "you shall have a pen and ink." And with this promise, (which was immediately after fulfill'd,) he left me: for singular as it appears at first, the man, who has ruin'd my fortune, and destroy'd my peace, who has seen me support the most agonizing struggles with indifference, was struck with a sentiment of remorse, on finding me capable of yielding calmly to a mere external degradation. Unable to judge of the feel-

ings of my heart, he was yet alive to those of my pride, and silently acknowledged that species of superiority, which enabled me to controul it.

I now sat down to write to you, and had finish'd my third page, when the disagreeableness of having no window curtains, induc'd me to rise, in order to change my position. I look'd thro' the sash, and saw the night was cloudy, when my eye was attracted by a moving light in the garden; on my nearer examination, I perceiv'd it was a lanthorn, tho' I saw not the person who held it, and forgot, in my surprise, that I was visible to him; the candles being behind me. Whilst contemplating it, I was startled by the sudden glaring of the light, (proceeding as I suppose from the opening of the lanthorn) before which a letter was held up. For an instant I started back; but, returning, the sign was immediately repeated; nor could

I

I doubt, but that the epistle was for me : how to attain it, became the grand object of my speculations, when I fortunately recollected a piece of shaded ribbon I had put in my pocket-book, in order to match, the first time I went to town. — For this treasure I eagerly sought ; and holding one end of it in my hand, suffer'd the card to unroll on the outside of the window ; the lanthorn seem'd for a moment to grope over the ground, and the letter was soon after held up, to which I perceiv'd the ribbon was fasten'd. My impatience now grew very great, and the string, of consequence, seem'd everlasting ; at length, I grasp'd the prize, and, satisfied in my own mind, that it came from you, with some very interesting intelligence, eagerly tore it open ; but guess my indignation on seeing the signature of “ William Nugent.” I flirted the letter away with the air of a Statira, and then pick'd it up again, with one better suited to my appearance. The

contents consisted of heavy censures of Mr. Obrien's conduct towards me, a comfortable dose of flattery, and liberal offers of assistance; concluding with a request, that I would answer it immediately, or, if depriv'd of pen and ink, honor the letter by kissing it at the window, and depend on the writer for placing me, in a few days, far above the utmost malice of Mr. Obrien. You will easily imagine my countenance at this modest request. For a moment I stood irresolute, as to the manner of shewing my indignation; till the idea struck me of extinguishing the candles, and diverting myself with seeing my *Ignus Fatuus*, glide impatiently about the garden. The scene was ludicrous enough to divert one who had not much besides to amuse her. Sometimes I beheld it exalted in the air, and sometimes as if meekly intreating on the ground; now whisk'd about abruptly in wrath,

wrath, and then displaying its full blaze in humble atonement ; still I was inflexible ; and continued to divert myself in obscurity, with the various evolutions, both pacific, and angry, till I lost it altogether, and the moon bursting forth from those clouds she had long irradiated with bright skirts of a rich yellow, fading imperceptibly into silver, put both those and the stars to flight, and seem'd to reign a solitary queen, thro' the blue concave, which bounded my view. Her beams threw a long stream of light upon the Thames, and a tranquil lustre upon every object ; whilst the dashing of distant oars, alone interrupted the profound silence of the evening. The charms of a devout pensiveness, took possession of my whole soul. I lifted my heart in secret to that Divine Being, who allows his creatures to mingle with him in thought, and felmyself ennobled. The spirits of my parents, the tender recollection of my friends, all

I had lost, and all I had yet to lose, prest on my memory. But it was not with anguish; I saw one world only enrich'd, by the impoverishing of another. I shed tears, but they fell unconsciously, and seem'd the sacred attestation of a thousand future virtues; devotion, that pure, and lambent flame, which burns upon the altar of the heart, seem'd to irradiate its faculties; a vestal fire, which, once extinguish'd, is the fatal omen of long and merited calamities.

Hail precious moments! stol'n from the black waste
Of murder'd time, auspicious midnight, hail!
The world excluded, every passion hush'd,
Here the soul sits in council; ponders past,
Predestines future action. Sees, not feels
Tumultuous life, and reasons with the storm.

In this disposition I went to bed; and you will not be surpris'd, when I add, that I rose the next morning in better health, than I have been for some time past.—

My

My spirits, exhausted by perpetual struggles, receiv'd a new turn from the whimsical alteration in my life, and secluded alike from domestic cares, or silent temptation, my heart seem'd reliev'd from the toil of combating itself. I had scarce done breakfast, when Mr. Obrien came in, and, (for he has a barbarous gayety of disposition,) with that smiling, lively air, peculiar to him; tho' from his conversation, I have reason to suppose, that if he had been touch'd with any sentiment in my favour, it had by this time, entirely subsided.

"Once more, good-day!" said he. "How does the second morning dawn upon you? As full of philosophy as the first? Pray, by what secret do you call up the vermillion of June, in the frosts of April? No need of a window in that bosom, too transparent, I am tempted to think for hypocrisy. And yet—but thou'rt an incomprehensible altogether. Yesterday, Madam, you

were desirous of a little serious conversation ; to-day I am in the humour to grant your request. I am going presently to Richmond, where I believe I shall dine : in the interim, I have taken some precautions, which you will do wisely not to attempt to frustrate ; for know Madam !” fixing his eyes sternly upon me, “neither you, nor your officious confidant have any further power of controuling me. Unravel the mystery as you can ; and tremble to think, that it depends on the conduct of an irritated fool, to regulate mine ; since I will not be outdone in revenge, even tho’ it should prove an Italian one.”

“Nor I, in resignation, Sir,” return’d I, collecting that blood, which had begun to thrill from my cheek, to my heart.—

“To shew you, however, the absurdity of all precautions, where virtue is not the dictate of sentiment, know, in your turn, that, tho’ apparently secluded from the world, I have been able to receive, a letter, and
might,

might, could I have resolv'd to forfeit my own esteem, have answer'd it; and that in such a manner, as totally to defeat your views, or resentment: since you have deprived yourself of the power of testifying it to the writer." He ran it over twice, without a single word to me; honoring Sir William, however, at intervals, with some epithets, which would not have been at all the more acceptable for being deserved: and, afterwards, put it very carefully in his pocket-book; saying, "it might be of service;" in extorting pecuniary assistance, I have since thought.

And thus, my dear, ends my chequer'd epistle. I have made no breaks in it, because none occur'd that would not have destroy'd the thread of my narrative.— And having been oppress'd since dinner, with a violent head-ach, I find myself under the necessity of yielding to it.— The maid who has seen me writing, has

offer'd to convey this to the post. Perhaps, after all, it may never reach you, and be only a trick to obtain it. But I will not suspect unreasonably; nor do I fear to stand the test even of Mr. O'Brien's perusal, where truth alone has dictated. His Italian revenge, with the hints that preceded it, embitter my solitude, by fears I dread to find realiz'd.—Lord Melrose, perhaps—That idea has conjur'd up a thousand phantoms of rage, infamy, and murder. If there is a possibility of sending me a single line, I need not solicit your friendship; you will feel all the fears, and all the expectations of,

Your ever Affectionate,

S. O'BRIEN.

L E T.

LETTER CXVII.

*To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Lady Helen
Nugent.*

Stanton-Audley, April.

ADVISE me, dear Edward, how I shall proceed. On the day of my arrival at Stanton-Audley, I had a short note from Mrs. Obrien (as I suppos'd) requesting to know every thing that passed; in consequence of which, I sent her your letters. The whole, however, by that of hers which I enclose, I am now convinc'd, was a trick of Mr. Obrien, who means to retaliate upon her. How shall I extricate her from this difficulty? If I go to Winbrook, I think he will not refuse my seeing her, and something must be done. I write this that it may be ready to send back by the servant, when

be

he brings yours, which is expected every moment, with an impatience you may easily imagine by.

Your affectionate,

HELEN NUGENT.

L E T.

LETTER CXVIII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mr.

Nugent.

Mount-Herbert.

THE arrival of Sir George, (as mention'd in my last,) oblig'd Lord Melrofs to a few moments of dissimulation.

"My dear friend," said he, advancing, "to what do I owe this pleasure?"

"To a circumstance, my Lord," return'd the Baronet, gravely, "which I should have been much better pleas'd, you had not been indebted to."

"Pardon me, Sir George," replied Lord Melrofs, with equal gravity. "Had you done me the honor to inform me, I was to expect a visitor, and not a friend, I should have known how to address you with more propriety." To this, the other made a long preamble, by way of answer;

and concluded with saying, that, "*in short*, he must frankly own, he had heard, Lady Melrofs was treated very ill."

"Be more frank, Sir George," said his friend, colouring deeply, "and add, that you believe it."

"He could not say but he did."

"My dear Sir George," cried I anticipating the indignant eye of Lord Melrofs, "He must, however, beg leave to observe, that it would be very hard to misconstrue the errors of a young and beautiful woman, into crimes."

"My dear Sir George," again cried I—

"That for his own part he saw nothing criminal in her conduct."—And again he beg'd leave to observe something, which I clearly discern'd Lord Melrofs would never have patience to hear. Once more, then, I interrupted him;

"Sir George, when you are fully acquainted with the circumstances that have
past,

past, I am well assur'd you will find sufficient cause to justify the consequence;—allow me to explain”——

“ Mr. Nugent, *I* have had the honor of being known for some years to Lord Melross. I do not know whether his Lordship has forgot it.”

“ When I have, Sir George,” return'd the latter, stifling his chagrin, “ I must at the same time, forget a thousand favours which are indelibly impress'd upon my heart. To your knowledge of that heart, I refer you for my justification.—The woman, whom you so warmly defend, has betray'd, and disgrac'd me;—I need not,—indeed cannot, add more.” He arose.

“ What chimeras have we here,” said the Baronet, “ what probabilities, what proofs.—These mad passions, my Lord are your masters.”

“ Allow

"Allow me to leave you, Sir George; I am not equal to a cool discussion upon this subject"—

"I am very sensible, that the persuasions of your friends"—

"Allow me, Sir George, to leave you"—

"The persuasions of your friends, I say"—

"Insupportable"—he stopt; *obstinacy*, should have followed; but a small remains of reason stepped in, to intercept the word.

"Their persuasions, and the impertinencies of the young Lord Somerset, induc'd you to take a wife, to whom you were not warmly attach'd. But at least recollect"—Back stepped Lord Melrofs from the door, near which he still stood, with an air that had volumes in it, had Sir George been a physiognomist.

"The impertinencies of Lord Somerset, induce *me* to take a wife! Do I hear
you

you right, Sir George? Lord Somerfet influence my actions!"——

"Not absolutely induce!" return'd the Baronet with a wild stare.

"*Absolutely induce!*" again re-echoed his friend. That tone, and that look, my good Lord, in a Court of Justice, thought I, would make the witness be forsworn, and an honest man impeach himself.—

"Absolutely induce! Edward, I dream surely!—Sir George, I am now calm;—explain this matter fairly to me, as it stands in your ideas, or those of the world, which I suppose are pretty nearly the same.—I shall be glad to unravel this mystery, and clear up some points, in which both, I believe, have widely mistaken my character."

Sir George protested he had nothing to explain; but the protestation came too late. The blunder was now irretrievable; and the thoughtful calm which succeeded in the mind of Lord Melross, convinc'd

convinc'd me the indignity sunk deep in it. The former now requested he might see Janetta, and was accordingly admitted. Left *tête à tête* with our friend, I at least hoped to win from the frankness of his disposition, what were his sentiments and intentions: but as the velocity of motion, most resemble stillness, so did his mind derive an apparent steadiness, from its activity. He walk'd about the room for some moments in silence, and then abruptly demanded of me, the name I had engag'd to win from Lady Melrofs.

"The moment of dissimulation, my Lord," said I, "is past. Reason, humanity, in a word, that which is the essence of all our faculties, and virtues, principle, has had time to resume its empire in your bosom. Remember your sword is due to your country, your life to your Creator. After this preface, it will be unnecessary to add, I know the villain. I have long
known

known him. In that, as well as affirming that I had left the letters in Grosvenor-Square, I voluntarily deceiv'd you, and forfeited for once, the hitherto, unbiass'd veracity of my own character, that I might allow you time to recover the nobler part of yours. Passion, pride, custom, will all demand their victim: love, honor, and humanity, may spare the sacrifice, when I add to it the name of *O'Brien*." He started, look'd up at me, and then cast down his eyes, with the consciousness of incontrollable emotion; whilst a faint flush'd past over his cheek, to which the same mortal paleness succeeded, that had attended the first discovery. But if his soul is as haughty as his eye, there lives not that being, who can injure him with impunity.

"The name of *Obrien*," continued I, was once distinguish'd to you, as that of a friend. A distinction it lost, only to find

find a tenderer, in your attachment to his wife. By adopting the customary methods of revenge, you will cut off the only possible hope of a tie, which however circumstances now oppose it, may one day render you happy; and involve the woman you best love, in horror, poverty, and grief. He sigh'd, even to an agony of passion. And leaning with one hand over his eyes, motion'd to me with the other to be silent.

"To advise, my Lord," continued I, "is my privilege; but to decide, must finally be yours. On the custom of duelling in general, I spare myself all arguments, but the conclusive one open to every heart; that he who adopts it, voluntarily entails the heights of misery on all he loves, merely to avoid the censures of all whom he contemns." Again he sigh'd, with restless perturbation; and, hearing the footstep of Sir George, I went eagerly out of the room, to stop him. With
some

some difficulty, I succeeded: and drawing him into the garden, explain'd in the clearest manner I was able, every circumstance that had pass'd. But the prepossessions of weak minds, are not easily overturn'd, and the obstinacy that is their usual attendant, often strengthens the opinion we aim at subverting. "He did not know, he could not see," any thing, I found, but what he chose to know, or see; and his conference with Lady Melross, had rooted every prejudice in her favor. —I did not aim at a confirmation, I might have offer'd, in the letters which I still possess, having with-held them, as Lord Melross had not immediately made the demand, lest they should prove fresh fuel to his indignation. They are not mine; nor ought in propriety to have escap'd me, even to my better-self.

On my return into the house, I found Lord Somers set had been with our friend.

Their

Their conference was short.—Do not be alarm'd, my dear!—Your brother is wounded, it is true; but not dangerously so; nor can we, with justice, censure an action, which proceeded rather from a combination of unfortunate circumstances, than intention. Had he arrived at any period but one so immediately subsequent to Sir George's intelligence, their meeting would have been entirely pacific; as it was, it produc'd an appointment for the ensuing morning, which Lord Melross rose, before it was light, to fulfil. This was the first intelligence we receiv'd; and the anxiety it left us in, may easily be imagin'd. Three hours were past in a state of expectation, that defied every effort of philosophy. To pursue him, (determin'd, collected as he now must be) was to assume a power, he would himself, perhaps, resent; and all other efforts were absurd.—At noon, we had a short note, dated
Richmond,

Richmond, whither he inform'd us he had accompanied Lord Somerset, to see his Lordship's wound dress'd, as well as to stop an effusion of blood from his own arm, which had been slightly grazed. He requested that Lady Melrose might immediately leave Mount-Herbert, since this *rencontre* must effectually publish the secret of her disgrace, and attract general curiosity; adding, that he would write to her, when at Bruton-Court, and should esteem it a particular obligation, if Sir George would settle every thing relative to her journey. A private postscript informed me, that he had only invented this commission to engage the Baronet from coming to him at that juncture, and hinted, that it might be better if I did not, since it would strengthen the illiberal disgust, already conceived by that gentleman against me.

Sir George had now a fair opportunity for a bustle, with which he was the better

satisfied, since my interference has long been as disagreeable to him as to Lady Somerset, nor have either of them discernment enough to distinguish the influence of sentiment, from the officiousness of curiosity. —He voluntarily engaged himself to escort Janetta some miles on her journey, and encourages in her, but too much, I fear, those chimerical hopes of reconciliation, which time, and the further explanation of Lord Melrofs, alone can annihilate: the latter indeed, disabled by the nature of his wound, from any immediate call upon Obrien, may now be induced to accept the cooler alternative of a divorce. —The rashness of Lord Somerset, has received a check which may have future good consequences, and the heavy cloud, long threatening to burst in thunder over all, perhaps be averted. To these favorable prospects, let me add, the hope of returning to the
best

INNOCENCE.

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best beloved of my heart, and of folding
her once more to that of her

Ever Faithful and Affectionate,

EDWARD NUGENT.

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LET.

LETTER CXIX.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs.
O'Brien.*

London. April.

BY a miracle I am enabled to tell you that I live ;—yes, my beloved friend, I now live indeed, for I owe my being, to him from whom, on earth, it derives its highest value. Ah, why are you not here? Has rapture any language but tears? In the moments of tremulous sensibility, when those only are its expletives, how sweet, how desirable is the hand of friendship, to catch them ere they return upon the heart.—Oh, you to whom mine has so long been known, you, whom neither time, nor absence have yet alienated, receive, and cherish its tenderest effusions! —Often, my dear and estimable friend,
have

have you sigh'd, but never, I hope, will you blush for her you have distinguish'd.

My last, I think, brought you down to that singular period, which completing my gradual descent from liberty and affluence, left me only exposed to one bitter struggle. My letter I had scarce found an opportunity of dispatching, before Mr. O'Brien came in; but plunged in a gloom so unusual, that, tho' unable to guess even at the events which had caused it, I was at no loss to discover they must deeply concern himself.—Devoid of all those gentler affections, from which half the world derive either their pleasures, or their cares, accustomed to smile at every remoter evil, to consider reflection upon the past as a folly, and upon the future as a curse, Mr. O'Brien lives solely to the present: to its temptations, he sacrifices madly every tie either of honor, or morality; and from its disappointments, en-

dures the turbulent anguish, or more dreadful despondency, from which gentler minds shrink with horror. Self-gratification, that *ignis fatuus*, which springing originally from corruption, ever evades the grasp, and resolves itself at last into its native grossness, sparkles continually before him, and the moment it sinks, seems to leave the whole creation in darkness.—I wonder not the votaries of pleasure are suicides, since the deadly glooms that succeed her reign, seem almost to anticipate mortality. To aim at regulating a mind thus at war with itself, was too formidable an undertaking.—Yet sickening, I knew not why, with vague and painful apprehension, a thousand times did I turn my dubious eyes on Mr. O'Brien, with that enquiring sympathy his constantly repelled.—He was rous'd from his *réverie* by the delivery of a note, which he tore open, on reading the superscription, with an eagerness that alone might have excited my

my curiosity.—Curiosity, did I say!—Alas, a thousand emotions started in painful flushes to my cheeks, on fancying I discern'd the hand of Lady Melrofs.—He read the billet twice; paused—hesitated—smiled with a mixture of doubt and exultation, and abruptly quitting the room, left me to all the misery of incertitude.—Lost in one of those painful meditations when the sickening senses seem to contract and bury themselves in the heart, leaving that scarce conscious of its own emotions, I walk'd for a considerable time up and down my apartment.—The door of it remained unlocked; the billet, I strongly suspected to be from Lady Melrofs, and the situation of Mr. Obrien's mind, left me no doubt but an important scheme engross'd it.—Every thing combined to urge me to some active measure; yet over those events which alone could direct me, there was spread a heavy and mysterious cloud,

which all my efforts could not penetrate.—Even if an assignation was intended, would my interference be of any avail?—Alas, when had it ever been so!—To act for myself was now to decide my fate; and the melancholy conviction that I had nothing to fear but from my own heart, determined me, however difficult the struggle, to remain passive to every future occurrence of fortune.—A suffocation I was not sensible of, till its violence awaken'd every faculty into terror, suddenly struck me with the idea of fire.—The evening was closing ere Mr. O'Brien left me, and my uneasy meditations had not allowed me to reflect that I had pursued them without any other light than that afforded by the dying embers from the grate. I lifted my eyes in astonishment on perceiving myself surrounded by a faint smoke, but my very soul died within me, when, precipitately opening the door, I found the smother increased

creas'd on the stairs.—With that agonizing sense of terror which springs at once from constitution and reason, I flew to my own apartment below: but the gaining it was only a final conviction of my danger; since from under the windows I saw a new and immense cloud of black smoke roll over the house, and almost obscure the trees which surrounded it; whilst the faint view I caught, only presented me a few unknown faces, over which gleam'd a dim and terrible light.—Shouts, screams, and various indistinct noises invaded the silence of evening, and stupified, rather than encouraged me; nor could I have been so far wrapt up in reflection, as not to have been sensible of them before, had not the room I inhabited, by lying backwards and high, effectually precluded all alarm from the front of the house. I flew to the stairs, but the flames raged with fury in the study, and spread terror around. I, nevertheless,

hazarded a few steps, but fainting and terrified, returned almost immediately, and for the first time uttered an involuntary shriek. A thousand confused sounds were reverberated upon my ear, but none that seem'd to promise me relief.—I tore down my hair, I wrung my hands, and traversing the apartments in an agony beyond all rational sensation of fear, again shriek'd thro' despair. One dear, one well known voice alone replied to me, whose magical influence seem'd to recall my scattered faculties. Directed by the sound, I started eagerly forward, and sunk at the feet of Lord Melross.

“Save me, save me,” cried I, with a phrenzical eagerness.—He clasp'd me to his bosom, utter'd a thousand vague and ardent expressions of tenderness, leading me at the same moment towards the stair-case, whence turning, with an air he vainly strove to render collected, I saw it was now in flames.

flames. The powerful protection of his presence had, however, restored my senses, and recollection returning with reason, I led thro' a passage, which communicating with the servants rooms, gave us thro' them the chance of escaping. The joyful confirmation was too powerful for my frame, and I recollect nothing more, till revived by a soft breeze, I open'd my eyes on a scene far different from the horrible and tumultuous one I had quitted. We were on the rustic seat you may remember in the meadow beyond the house. The sober grey of the evening was deepen'd by the thick foliage which spread over us, while the faint lustre that still stream'd from the west only allow'd my heart to discern the features dearest to it, and the jarring voices from Winbrook, borne a contrary way by the wind, died faintly upon my ear. Revive, did I say ! rather, I began to live ; for till I cease to do so, the sweet sensation that took possession of my mind,

will never be effaced from it. It was not joy—it was not transport—it was not an oppressive pleasure, where the sense, as when fainting under the odours of some exquisite flower, aches with delight;—it was like the breeze, which having past over the whole bosom of nature, seems to have exhaled and blended every thing in it most exquisite. The voice of Lord Melrofs dissolved the illusion:—the damp—the air—the evening, all became the subjects of his fear: he prest to convey me to a place of safety; alas! I had forgotten his arms were not such, and the recollection first convey'd a pang.—Joy, pleasure, hope, those lively embers still glowing in my soul, which but a moment before had kindled to so bright a blaze, were suddenly damped. I slowly arose, and prepared to follow him:—overwhelmed with the consciousness of having received, and returned, expressions of attachment ill-suited my situation, and

and which the tender familiarity of his manner, convinced me he had not forgotten. We crossed the meadow, and struck into the road where his phaeton was waiting; one servant only attended, but as he held two horses, I supposed his companion was gone to assist at Winbrook.

With what different emotions were Lord Melrofs and myself then agitated: he, all anxiety, thought those moments ages which detain'd me, whilst I on the contrary, prolong'd them by a voluntary tediousness, since every one that past stole somewhat from a happiness, the succeeding were totally to annihilate. Engross'd by the care of the horses, whose spirit he was ill able to rein, from having hurt his arm by some accident in the morning, he could now only give me momentary proofs of his attention, and ready every instant to check the turbulent rapidity with which we drove, I strove by a silence, doubtless sufficiently

sufficiently singular, to conceal those tears, the soothing sounds of his voice repeatedly drew forth. In somewhat more than a quarter of an hour we drew up by a gate that struck off from the road, and my Lord sprung out.—Rous'd from my torpor by his attempt to assist me, I voluntarily stretch'd out that hand, I had so often, so inexorably withdrawn, and repeated in a voice which sufficiently betray'd my emotion, "We are going then to separate." "Never," return'd he warmly, "but at the hazard of less precious drops than these." Then giving the horses in charge to the servant, he led me across the field, over a small wooden bridge, which brought us to a cottage I immediately recognized.—It was that he rebuilt after it was blown down, and the situation of which, tempted him to furnish those pretty rustic apartments where we have so often drank tea.—I now for the first time began to distrust his intention.

"For

"For Heaven's sake, where are you leading me?" cried I.

"A few moments of confidence, my Life," return'd he, "and trust to a heart that adores you." I was weak enough to follow him into the cottage, where we found a woman extremely old and decrepid, who was spinning, whilst a young labourer slept in an opposite corner, to both of whom, the entrance of Lord Melrofs occasioned no little confusion. Alarmed, agitated, and blushing at the weakness I had not power to resist, I suffer'd the latter to lead me to the apartment above, nor was I then struck with the singularity of finding it lighted up, and ready apparently for my reception. Lord Melrofs remained a moment behind, giving some directions for his servant, but in a voice so low and indistinct, that I am afraid my utmost partiality cannot acquit him of a design to make me suppose, he was sending for a more proper conveyance than the phaeton.

"You

"You have saved me, my Lord," said I, on his entrance, correcting as much as possible, the tremor of my voice, "by an exemplary courage and generosity, from the most dreadful, perhaps, of all fates.— Shall I intreat you to add to the favour, by informing me in what manner I may return to——my friends."—The last words trembled on my lips; the name of Mr. Obrien, tho' the properest, the only one I ought to have pronounced, obstinately retreated from them, and my heart repelled the sober dictates of my reason.

"And have you then those to seek?" replied he, obliging me to sit down, and placing himself next me; "I hoped to have been honored by ranking amidst the first: a title however so unequal to the ardor of my wishes, that it can only be desirable, as it permits me to aspire to another.—Hear me," continued he, with redoubled emotion on perceiving mine;—

"I

"I understand but too well those anticipating, those indignant glances.—At a moment, that has ever since been an æra in my life, you accused me, and truly, of doing injustice to your character; yet even then, tho' sensible only of your personal charms, my very soul adored you.—Ah, you have been but too amply avenged for the momentary blindness, When to the graces of form, I discerned a mind capable of eclipsing even them"—

"My Lord!"—

"Silence me not," interrupted he, with a tender vehemence;—You must not, nay, you cannot; it is no longer a weak, a frivolous passion that throws me at your feet, with the light gallantry, due only to the light; it is a strong, an unconquerable feeling, equally established by every sense and every sentiment. When with this perfect form, that noble and elevated understanding," continued he, still softening his eyes

eyes and voice, "I was happy enough to find a heart"——

"Ah hold, my Lord," cried I, rising in the utmost agitation, "at least weigh well what you are about to say, and blot from your memory, if possible, a weakness which I can never think of without shame"——

"Nor I," continued he, "without transport: In this moment, the happiest, the only happy one of my life, my heart demands to be heard: no forms, no coldness can silence it; and even those timid eyes, I will for once venture to believe averted rather with softness than distaste."——Alas, my friend, he judged but too truly; those weak mirrors of my soul reflected all its tenderness.—Lost in the pleasure of loving and of being beloved, a powerful and sweet enchantment seem'd to steal over my senses, to debilitate my reason, and unnerve my heart. The habits of that heart, however, involuntarily recurred;

recurred; the momentary delusion that bewilder'd, misled, and had almost betray'd it, sunk like the grosser particles of atmosphere, and left it pure and unclouded. —In my life, grief had risen upon grief, and struggle upon struggle.—To look up to my Creator, with the consciousness of innocence had so long been its blessing, that it was now become necessary.—An impulse more rapid than reflection, more strong than reason, impress'd this conviction, at the very moment I felt most inclined to regret any; it had been stamp'd by my tears, and was never to be effaced.—In fine, I sigh'd, I trembled, and recover'd.—But what eloquence could silence that dangerous lover, who sensible of his influence, now claim'd it all! —The latitude of sex and custom, the insupportable recollection of his wrongs, the overwhelming torrent of his passion, swept away those boundaries which insurmountably circumscribed me. In a tumult of indignation,

Indignation, he reproached me, even bitterly reproach'd me, with having bestowed that hand on another, which united with his, might have fixt the happiness of both. Diffimulation became then too difficult a task.—To be no longer the object of his love, was to lose a distinction, acquired but through his weakness, and valuable, perhaps, only through my own.—But to hazard his esteem,—to have the grief of hearing myself upbraided for the most painful, the most cruel disappointment of my life,—it was insupportable: it urged me to dare every thing; and the transports of his indignation, first discovered to me, that in unveiling the fatal machination which separated me from him, and united me to Obrien, I had hazarded the existence of both.—It was now my turn to soothe, to intreat, to supplicate; Oh Heavens, how severe was the struggle, when reduced to work upon a passion I dared not indulge,

indulge; to use an influence I trembled to hear him avow, to flatter hopes I blush'd to participate, I found no reward but in the consciousness of rectitude.— Could I at the very moment when I most felt its value, divest myself of that glorious support, and justify the example of a libertine who had left me no other blessing?—Accustom'd to refer every minuter action to the examination of my own bosom, could any sophistry enable me to set that powerful judge aside?—And in ceasing to be the happiness of my life, would it not involuntarily become its curse?—"Leave me then, my Lord," cried I repeatedly, with a sort of wild enthusiasm, "leave me, if you wish to prove your attachment sincere.—To make me happy, is not in your power, and can it be in your will, to make me otherwise?—Alas, it is not indifference, it is not fear, or even the dictates of a justifiable prudence which induce me to banish you; it

is

is a powerful combination of principles, that have sunk deep into my soul, and been cultivated there, till they now rise spontaneously. Yet think not you are absent from, tho' you leave me;—in those moments when your image will be all that remains to me of happiness, suffer me at least to remember without remorse, that I have loved you, and without shame, to acknowledge myself beloved." To this impassion'd rant (for what romance, my dear, is like that of an agitated heart?) far from being convinced, he return'd every illusive, and importunate solicitation; when both were struck as with the noise of some person moving in the adjoining chamber.—Sex instantly predominated in each: for whilst I sunk back half fainting, he started from his knees, and with a haughty precipitation threw open the intermediate door.—Gracious Heaven, what were our sensations, when we found ourselves under the same roof with Lady Mel-
ross,

ros. *His eyes*—I thought I had seen all their expression, but never, never could I survive a look like that he gave her; whilst with a tone that almost excluded reply, he interrogated her as to the motives of her being there. Pale—trembling—sick at the very heart, I felt all the degradation to which I was exposed.—My appearance so singular;—my cheek yet suffused with the mingled glow of anxiety and love;—my hair fallen to my waist, and hanging loosely over my shoulders;—alone with Lord Melros at such a time—in such a place—one only barrier arose between me and infamy,—Janetta, if the witness of my tenderness, had at least been the witness of my innocence too:—with her it rested to avow it, and if yet one spark of honor or humanity remain'd, that avowal would necessarily be made. The first impulse of grief and terror, slowly subsided into self-congratulation. By a strange
and

and singular fatality, the event which had appeared the completion of disgrace, was in fact the only one that could rescue me from it; and when I found that the accident of her being indisposed on the road to Bruton-Court, had induced Sir George Irwin to place Lady Melrofs in a cottage where she had spent many innocent and happy hours, rather than expose her to the mortification of going back to Mount-Herbert, or the gaze of a public Inn, my courage and my hopes revived.—My Lord, however, could neither conquer his agitation or resentment; and in complying with my earnest solicitations to leave us, he rather indulged the petulance of an overcharged mind, than her tears or my anxieties.

The moment of his departure, seemed whilst it shut out one world, to open another to Janetta and myself. Each singly under the scrutinizing eye of a rival,
the

the distinctions of rank—the luxuries of fortune withdrawn, unattended, unadmired—the veil of fancy seem'd to fall, and we stood, for the first time, the beings God had created us. How sweet, how consolatory was that moment, when no sympathetic blush absorbed the tear which fell for the errors of another.—I like her am weak—am degraded—am friendless—am unfortunate,---but I am innocent, again repeated my heart, and the balm of that word healed every wound the preceding ones had made. Habit only, perhaps, had enabled me then to continue so ; I shuddered at the thought, and look'd up in silent gratitude to that being who, proportioning our struggles to our strength, rarely permits us at once to rise to virtue, or to sink to vice ; but graciously rendering every important action dependent upon a chain of smaller ones, points out to us the necessity of that unshaken attention to all, which alone, perhaps, can strengthen

us to act with rectitude on any. Man, born to gain or lose vigor by every mental contest, unwarily prepares a future weakness, when he yields to a present one, and whilst he defies a giant, sinks beneath an army of pigmies,

The arrival of Mr. Nugent, suspended for awhile the meditations of Lady Melross and myself. He agreed however, with me (tho' contrary to the earnest entreaty of Lord Melross, convey'd thro' him) that my only prudent plan, was to remain at the farm till the hour appointed for Jannetta's departure in the morning; when by sending for my own carriage, and driving immediately from herto Winbrook, I might obviate the censure my absence would otherwise incur. With this determination he left me, and heavily past the hours till the morning arrived. Equally fearful of oppressing or exalting Lady Melross, my conduct could hardly either way ensure

sure even my own approbation; whilst from hers, I could only gather an impatience to depart, which argued no very favourable idea of me. Proportionably still undepress'd, a succession of light ideas, of imaginary hopes, of wild and undiscovered pleasures, by starts engrossed her. She already seem'd to anticipate the time when some accident was to bid her emerge from obscurity,—to blaze again in diamonds, and to lead the votaries of dissipation. She more than once reverted to her youth, not so much in excuse for the past, as with a sort of latent expectation for the future, and as a pledge of enjoyments which could only cease with that. —The carriages at length arrived, and we parted—perhaps indeed forever. Oh, Heavens, what different beings each, from the period when first we met. To that fair dawn of life, when every object rose pure and untainted, when the mental eye wandered

over a kind of fairy-land, its own magic enriched and illumined, a long and dreary day of disappointment had succeeded.— Those dark clouds upon which the warm beams of fancy had scattered ideal rainbows, had burst in storms and overwhelmed everything beneath. Amidst the deluged wrecks of my hopes, my wishes and my expectations, virtue alone, like the consecrated ark, seem'd to defy the storm, and to rise higher upon the tide which had absorbed every thing besides.

To Winbrook I drove, or rather, to what was Winbrook ; for tho' the flames were extinguish'd, the smoke, the tumult, and, in short, all the horrors of a conflagration were still visible. Nor could I learn the least intelligence of Mr. Obrien, who had never appeared there from the moment he parted with me, tho' the fire proved to arise from his negligence in leaving a lighted candle on the table where he had
been

been sealing some letters, to which, and other papers, it communicated in less than half an hour with a rapidity that fill'd the study with flames before any discovery arose. A note the servants had vainly kept for their master (it being brought a few moments after his departure) was now put into my hands. I knew the superscription too well, and immediately committed to destruction a testimonial of that false courage which might have doom'd me forever to the most exquisite misery: I need hardly add, it was a preremptory challenge from Lord Melrofs to Mr. O'Brien, dated from Richmond, four hours previous to his rescuing me.

Mr. Nugent's first proposal on finding me wholly unprotected, was to send for you; nor need I recapitulate the motives for my declining an offer every way so delicate, so considerate, and so kind. In my situation, it was the chance of a mo-

ment which was to raise or sink my character forever; and even that of the most respectable of her sex might not prove a shelter, when she was view'd as the nominal relation, the undoubted intimate of Lord Melrofs; when with difficulties to encounter in her family, it was known she increased them for my sake: yet a protector, and an immediate one was necessary. To venture boldly, is sometimes to be successful.— Lady Almerstone had profess'd herself my friend: it was now in her power to be so essentially. To demand her intervention was at least to anticipate the reports that might reach her, and in some measure to prove myself worthy of it. I parted therefore from Mr. Nugent, whose anxiety with regard to Mr. Obrien's absence, and the probable conduct of Lord Melrofs, now equall'd my own, and order'd the carriage to Lord Almerstone's.

That

That I was successful in my application my date will inform you, tho' weary fingers oblige me for the present to pause. To those generous hearts which so feelingly sympathize with mine, I have minutely described all my struggles, and even all my vanity. The events I knew you could be at no loss to guess from Mr. Nugent's generous and kind interposition, but it is the trifles of life which constitute its charm, and form that cement of affections and sentiments, whence perhaps, we ultimately derive our happiness.

A few hours of repose, will, I hope, enable me to resume my task, till when I dispatch this, and am, my dearest friend.

Ever yours,

S. O.

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L E T.

LETTER CXX.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs.
O'Brien.*

Grosvenor-Square.

THE flutter of spirits in which I left Winbrook, slowly subsided as I drew near town, and the impression of past scenes became weaker, in proportion as the future approach'd. Escaped from every thing that could agitate or touch me, I was to solicit the protection of a family where prudence was the first virtue, and sensibility so veiled by the ceremonials of rank, that it was difficult to penetrate to the one, without infringing upon the other. —I was to suppress my feelings; to conceal an agitated heart, under an appearance of tranquillity, and to recount the events which had reduced me to such a singular appeal, with that air of calmness
so

so difficult to be assumed by the agitated heart of the relater, yet so necessary to give the relation its due weight with those who hear. The very attempt at conquering my anxieties, diminish'd the courage which owed its vigor to them, and I was a thousand times on the point of returning to Winbrook, and trusting my reputation to the internal consciousness of integrity. The time however, elapsed in reflection, and I rattled over the stones of Piccadilly before I had sufficiently collected myself to know in what manner I should best regulate so strange an intrusion on Lady Almerstone. Every idea, and every fear, however, were lost in one powerful sensation of terror, on being suddenly overtaken by Sir George Irwin, who gallop'd up at the moment when my carriage stopt. Eagerness, perturbation, and anxiety, were strongly depicted on his countenance: he alighted instantly on catching my eye, and open-

ing the door before the servant had time, told me, as he offered his hand, that he had been in pursuit of me above an hour. —What he added, I know not. Sensible that I had left him engaged in escorting Lady Melrofs, and without a thought relative to me, unable to account for the absence of Mr. Obrien, and uncertain what might have been the conduct of Lord Melrofs, or whether accident had not effected the meeting I struggled to prevent, I read every thing horrible in the countenance of Sir George, and sunk into so strong a fit, as required all the efforts of art to recover me. By the kind attention of Lady Almerstone, (to whom the ceremonies of introduction were thus rendered unnecessary) that recovery was effected. I seemed indeed to “live at once,” for the moment sense return’d, it was with that exquisite keenness of recollection terror only inspires. “You come,
Sir

Sir George," said I, "to prepare me for some horrible event; and this weakness of constitution may well teach you to expect the same of mind. Tell me, however, immediately, instantly, the very worst; and assure yourself, that I can sustain every thing but uncertainty,"

"Sir George comes to prepare you for many events, my dear," said Lady Almerstone, with an air of concern.

"For *many* events! Ah, Madam, there is but one in the whole universe"—I stoop; unconquerable emotion silenced me; while so excessive a tremor pervaded my whole frame, as seem'd little short of the last pang of nature. Lady Almerstone, and Sir George, look'd at one another with the dubious air of people who know not whether to conceal or avow a secret, till they were urged to the latter, by my reiterated intreaties.

"When I left you, Madam, to attend Lady Melrofs," said the Baronet, at length,

"it was (as you indeed know) with the intention of seeing her off, and returning immediately to Mount-Herbert, to endeavour at a reconciliation between her and my Lord. We had scarce, however, parted, when, by an express from the servants who attended her, the latter intention was defeated;—she has eloped"---

"Eloped!" repeated I, breathing again at an intelligence so short of my fears, "Lord Melrofs then"——

"The rest we will defer till you are better," said Lady Almerstone. "with the assurance only, that no other ill consequence has arisen from this circumstance at present, than the confirmation of those suspicions, which had long fallen on Mr. O'Brien."

"Defer, Madam!" I eagerly exclaimed, "Ah, no, no, I can never be better, till I have heard all. Lord Melrofs then, and Mr. O'Brien, have not met."

"They

“ They cannot ; for with regret I add, that Mr. Obrien is the companion of her flight ”——

“ To the baseness of a pretended indisposition,” said Sir George, by which, she prevail’d on me to let her pass the night at the farm, she was guilty enough to add an assignation ; the people of the house, accustom’d to obey her, willingly convey’d a note to Mr. Obrien. He fulfill’d the appointment it contain’d, and miss’d Lord Melrofs and you, Madam, only by a few moments.” At this part of Sir George’s speech, I started, recollected the very candles which were burning for them on our entrance at the farm, and shuddering, adored in silence that Providence, which had so singularly prevented a *rencontre* that must have been fatal in its consequences. “ But can it be possible, Madam ? And is this all ?” said I, addressing myself to each by turns, with a mixture of gratitude and impatience, that almost seem’d

seem'd to amount to joy.—The silence of both again struck terror on my heart, and overwhelmed my frame.

“Whether it will relieve your apprehensions to tell or conceal the worst, I am at a loss to discover,” said her Ladyship, after a pause. “Prepare however, for a nearer grief; a more alarming, and even a more disgraceful event; but let your courage rise with the occasion, and, be assured of the kindest protection, both from my Lord, and myself.”

—Oh, my dear, how dreadful was this preparation! ready by turns, to start out into phrenzical impatience, to waste my very soul in tears, or yield up all its powers, at once into insensibility, I remain'd apparently torpid only from my excessive anxiety to learn more, whilst the contrary impulses, pressing at once upon my heart, swell'd it almost into bursting:

“Mr. Obrien,” continued Lady Almerstone, “had a motive for his flight, that effectually

effectually forbids his return. I need not tell you, that he has long ago been ruined as far as a gamester can be so; and the failure of Davenport, by stripping him of that ideal property on which he traffick'd, reduced him to a dangerous alternative. In a word, by a forged acceptance of a note, drawn by himself, he is become amenable to the laws of his country, and knows not whether its justice may not even now pursue him." She stopt;---but I was silent. Shocking, disgraceful, overwhelming, as this intelligence appear'd, it was at that moment so unexpected, so remote from any I had prepar'd myself for, that the torrent of my ideas seem'd totally suspended, and left me as much astonish'd as touch'd.——She continued,——

"The circumstances that first excited suspicion, occurred at our bankers, and fortunately at a time when my Lord happened to be present. The names of the parties

parties on both sides, struck him with a surprise, not unmingled with apprehension, and he had the presence of mind to request a private examination into the affair." Again she paused, but perceiving I only wept, proceeded.

"That examination, sufficiently proved the fraud; and Mr. Obrien not being to be found, (for it was at the time of the fire last night, that he was sought), application was made to Sir William Nugent, (now Lord Killarloe) before the disgrace of a public enquiry was incurred. His Lordship, however, declined interfering"——

"It was like him," interrupted I, with an indignation I could not repress.

"And the generosity of him who should have been the prosecutor," added her Ladyship, "alone has rescued Mr. Obrien from infamy."

"And who, Madam, is this generous friend?"

"That,"

“That,” return’d she, half smiling, “it is not at present of consequence to know. —The alarm incident to the discovery had sufficiently awaken’d the fears of Mr. O’Brien, who has probably some chain of connections, by which he gain’d under-hand information. I have told you, he was not to be traced. It now plainly appears that he was with Lady Melrofs, at the farm; and her elopement to day, leaves us no room to doubt but their route is the same. The note therefore lies dormant for awhile, that a restraining power may be held over Mr. O’Brien; it will, however, be paid when our plans for extricating you from him are regulated, nor has he any actual cause to fear a prosecution. He has doubtless by this time, almost reach’d the Continent; caution and prudence may therefore silence all surmise: the derangement of his affairs, will be a very fashionable

fashionable and plausible reason for his withdrawing, and your conduct, my dear, with the protection, my Lord and myself will be now happy to extend, will sufficiently stamp you with the respect, he has forfeited."

Her Ladyship paused here, with an air more collected and chearful than she had hitherto assumed. Deceived by the apparent stoicism with which I had sustain'd this shock, she supposed me insensible to, or prepared for it, and waited in silence for my reply. Alas! I had none to offer. — Relieved from the sanguinary visions which had floated before me, I had respired for a moment more freely; it seemed necessary to expel one fear, before my soul had room for a second. But how deep, how insupportable was the impression of that second, when it rush'd upon me. Two years ago, a fortunate and happy being, I look'd round upon the whole universe, and thought it made for me. —

Every

Every voice was then music to my ear, and every eye convey'd adulation to my soul. The charms of nature, the luxuries of art, by turns, elevated or attracted me : the sun rose but to bring me health, and set to invigorate it. Now, broken in constitution, ruined in fortune, obloquy and contempt seem'd my portion ; the boundless ocean of the world, lay vainly stretch'd out before me, whilst my aching heart fluttered over its billows, like a tired bird, to whom the whole horizon affords not a resting place. Even the vices of Mr. O'Brien sunk beneath their attendant miseries, and the waste of ruin that overwhelm'd us both, form'd, for the first time, an ideal union. I remember'd nothing, thought of nothing but the single incident that thus wound up my fate, and in ceasing to hear the voices of Lady Almerstone, and Sir George, I alone recollected they had been speaking. Both, had indeed, by turns address'd me, and engross'd with

with the care of consoling, perceived not that their consolations were unheard. Sir George, at length, took his leave; and when Lady Almerstone inform'd me, that he was the generous friend on whom the fraud had been committed, and by whom the discovery had been suppress'd, every softer sensation return'd in tears upon my soul, and with gratitude, its virtues, and its hopes revived.

It was now, no longer time to dissemble with friends, who had proved themselves truly such. I therefore avow'd the whole secret of my union with Mr. Obrien, in order to vindicate my character from a choice, that must forever disgrace it; and accepting the protection offer'd me, once more ventured to look forward.

I need not add, that this whole transaction will to the world, remain still an inviolable secret. Should Mr. Obrien return,

turn, or any channel of communication be open'd between us, I have now power to demand a separate maintenance. For him, reduced to poverty, to meanness, to contempt,—a prey to pride, and passions he can no longer gratify, my heart sincerely feels: but oh! it bleeds for the erring and unfortunate woman who has put her fate irretrievably into his hands. Mr. Obrien, it is true, is never brutally cruel, because he is so sanguine and vain, that his disappointments rarely sour him beyond the moment. But on that frail barrier rests all her protection. For as he is nothing from principle, so he is every thing from caprice. But why return to useless discussions? Can the man who wants a heart, diffuse any thing but misery? He needs no borrow'd weapon to wound the bosom of another; every feeling it is enriched with, presents him a dagger. Sir William Nugent, is I find at last, dignified with

with the title of Right Honorable.—A title indeed ! may it prove the incitement to virtue, since it is not its reward.

Lord Almerstone has dispatch'd his steward to Winbrook, in order to preserve what remains from the wreck. That Lord Melross should so seasonably interpose for my rescue, was, I found, owing to the alarm which reach'd him on the road from Richmond to Mount-Herbert ; various messengers having been dispatch'd for an engine. Ah, how valuable is that life *he* has preserved.

Write to me I conjure you ; I dare not ask you to come. There was a time, when I was fortunate enough to see the friend of my heart, without restraint. But almost a stranger myself under this roof, we should both be oppress'd with the formality of a woman who has no other fault.

Tell

Tell me how Lord Melrofs conducts himself, what are his sentiments of me,—but above all, what is the matter with his arm. It gave him more pain, I am sure, than he would acknowledge, and I have since remembered that he said, the servant had been driving him.—Adieu, most beloved friend.

L E T.

LETTER CXXI.

*To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen
Nugent.*

Richmond.

A Terrible event has extinguish'd every feeling but pity for the unfortunate Janetta. Alas, my dear, she will never live to realize those scenes of erring enjoyment she had dared to plan. An early, and unprepared victim to the past, the dreadful future will, I hope, be a merciful one. For Obrien, Great God, how vast, how heavy will be his account.

Not to keep you in suspense, Lord Melrofs yesterday received a strange, and almost unintelligible scrawl from the mistress of some paltry Inn, on the Kentish road, informing him, that a woman who call'd
herself

herself his wife, (tho' it was plain the writer consider'd her in a very different light) had stop't there with a gentleman in the way to Dover, on finding herself suddenly taken ill, as it is supposed from a fright, on being attack'd by two highwaymen.— That left by her companion, she had been delivered prematurely of a dead child, and was not expected long to survive. It concluded with an address to his charity, and a request that the relief might be immediate. Edward says, that Lord Melrofs was deeply affected.—How indeed could he be otherwise. The very stile of the letter cost me floods of tears. A woman, born in the very lap of luxury, taught to look forward to every view that renders life desirable, yet in the bloom of youth, and possessed of personal beauty enough to impoverish her whole sex, reduced thus to vulgar scorn, or vulgar charity, and *self*-reduced too—I needed not to recollect in her the companion of my earliest years, to call

forth all my sensibility. I would have gone to her—but that was not deem'd proper. Lord Melrofs, however, made it his urgent request that my mother should. She is accompanied by his Lordship's chaplain, Mr. Powell, Mr. Nugent, and every medical assistance.

Forgive me, if in the agitation of my spirits, I do not reply at length to yours:—you must surely have learnt by this time, that Lord Melrofs received the hurt in his arm in a duel with my brother.—The latter is still at Richmond, and you will see by my date that I am with him.—His wound is painful, but not dangerous, being in the flesh only. That of Lord Melrofs was trifling, or he could not have drove you at all, tho' in order to lead Mr. Nugent into the opinion, that he was disabled from meeting Obrien, he voluntarily magnified it. I cannot withhold

hold my forgiveness, but I confess, I think he might have borne much from a brother of mine.—Adieu, my dearest friend.—Keep up your spirits, Powell is to write to my Lord; and I sympathize too truly in your anxiety, not to send you the earliest intelligence of Lady Melrofs.—Adieu.

LETTER CXXII.

*To the Right Hon. Lord Melrofs—From
the Rev. Mr. Powell.*

My LORD, April.

THE gratitude and respect which binds me to an implicit compliance with your Lordship's commands, was never put to so singular and severe a test as the present; and I ought, perhaps, to spare your feelings and your delicacy, an account which will I fear, shock both. I must preface it with the awful intelligence, that Lady Melrofs is no longer an object for any other sentiment but that pardon, nature and religion equally extend, to those who can offend no more.

The Dowager Lady Somerset, your Lordship's worthy friend Mr. Nugent, the two medical gentlemen, and myself, arrived

ed here about twelve, and were introduced to a scene, which nothing but the strict injunction laid professionally upon me, could have prevented my drawing a veil over. In the corner of a mean room, even amidst the mean ones with which these houses abound, damp with the weather, and doubly intolerable by dirt, in a bed, which from its "tape-tyed curtains, never meant to draw," reminded us of that in which the distinguish'd Duke of Buckingham is said to have expired, lay the scarce less distinguish'd Lady Melrofs: apparently lifeless, livid, and without one trace of beauty. What, my Lord, is that animating somewhat, for the loss of which, the finest features cannot compensate? Lady Somerset turn'd instantly faint. —Mr. Nugent was much affected, and both for a moment retired, while Dr. S. enquired in a low voice, if the patient was asleep. The woman of the house, to whom misery was too familiar to be touching,

and whose most refined ideas scarce extended to the keeping within the bare duties of humanity, answer'd him only by a repetition of the question in a loud and coarse voice, at the same time drawing aside the only serviceable tatter of the curtain. The Lady half rais'd her eyelids, and under them I saw the ball roll faintly round. Inexpressibly shock'd at an address we had not foreseen, we instantly dismiss'd the woman, and, with all the precaution possible, I mention'd the persons who were arriv'd, and by whose desire they came.—For a moment she shrunk into her pillow, and seem'd to undergo a convulsive emotion; repeating somewhat I did not at first understand, but which I afterwards found to be an enquiry, whether your Lordship was present. I assured her, you were not; and Mr. Nugent, on his return, added those consolatory messages with which he was entrusted. On my motion-
ing

ing for the performance of the sacred duties proper to the occasion, the medical gentlemen withdrew for a few moments, and having written (tho' they confess'd with no other view but that of strengthening her for conversation) gave it as their opinion, that the rites might for a short time be delay'd. We retired with the intention of returning in the afternoon, but about four, were alarm'd with the melancholy intelligence, that the lady was in the agonies of death. We hurried to her chamber, where we found her apparently beyond every idea of this world. Yet as her lips moved with imperfect sounds, (which they had done for some hours past) Mr. Nugent drew near, and said in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard by all present, "If Madam, at this awful moment, you think you owe any reparation to the character of your Lord, I solemnly, in his name, adjure you to make it." Her ear was no longer sensible of the difference

of voices ; she feebly raised her eyes, and supposed the speaker, to be the first whom she saw.

“ Lady Somerset, I think,” said she : —the former advanced and took her hand. —Lady Melrose wrung hers.—“ Oh Madam, should you see my cousin die, think of me.—Her bed will be surrounded by friends,—her offspring will bless her—and (in a more inward and hollow tone, as if struggling with bodily and mental anguish) and their blessings will be heard ; *mine* ”—a single, but emphatic glance, spoke all she felt. A pause ensued, during which she made repeated efforts to speak, without being articulate, but at length succeeded.—

“ Powell, give my Lord this, (her ring which she had grasped in her hand) I received it as the pledge of every earthly good, had not the sense of guilt embittered all. That sense now survives every other ;—decay strengthens—terror augments

ments it—I only know that I live, by the dread I feel at dying.”

“Collect yourself, Madam,” said I, perceiving her hand was suffused with a cold dew, and had a convulsed motion,—“the minister of a Being who is all-merciful, is now before you, and will assist your prayers.” The exhortation came too late; one agonizing burst of remorse lifted her eyes with an energy, that had somewhat shocking in it towards Heaven, and expelled her soul forever.

Thus, my Lord, died in an hour when she was, perhaps, but little prepared for it, the young and beautiful Lady Melross; a victim to the world. In her errors many participate; let them tremble lest they should do so in her punishment. I cannot better conclude, than in the inspired language of the Prophet Isaiah.—“How art thou fallen from Heaven, Oh Lucifer, thou son of the morning! Thy pomp is brought,

brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols.—The worm is spread over thee, and worms cover thee."

Mr. Nugent requests me to inform your Lordship, that he shall be detained here a short time longer, but means in two days, at furthest to relate all other particulars.

I have the Honour to remain, my Lord,

With all due Respect,

Your Lordship's most Obliged,

And very humble Servant,

W. POWELL.

L E T.

LETTER CXXIII.

*To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Lord
Melrofs.*

DEAR NUGENT, *Grosvenor-Square.*

THE singularity of receiving a message from you thro' Powell, without even a line from yourself, or a motive assigned for your silence, could not fail to strike me with surprise and curiosity. It has done more; it has awakened a doubt, of which, I have been strongly tempted to satisfy myself in person. How highly I esteem you, and how much I value the esteem I receive from you, it is now unnecessary to repeat. But there are some points, Mr. Nugent, in which the dearest friend on earth, ought never to interfere. I am neither sanguinary nor vindictive; but if you know any thing of O-

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brien,

brien, and voluntarily conceal it, that moment is the last of our friendship. Weigh it well! You are capable of daring much where you think you are right:—but this is a subject, on which I can no longer endure either discussion or advice.

Unfortunate Janetta!—Why—but she made her own fate.

I send this by Vaughan. He has my orders to return instantly; since an affirmative, or a negative is all I require:—and should he be detained three hours beyond the time for posting it, I shall be on the road.—If I have written warmly impute it to the occasion, and assure yourself, that I am on every other,

Unalterably yours,

MELROSS.

L E T.

LETTER CXXIV.

*To Lord Melrofs, Grosvenor-Square—From
Mr. Nugent.*

Dover, April.

THAT a *message* from me, my Lord, should excite your surprise, was not more than I expected; tho' I confess I was not quite prepared to hear it expressed in so preremptory a manner. The acknowledgment, that I dare do much, where I think myself right, is however, a species of flattery I ought not to overlook, since it seems extorted from your judgment, even when disapproved by your heart. I am too vain of such an encomium not to aim at proving my title to it, and too confident of your approbation to be alarm'd at your injunctions. Esteem, my Lord, is fortunately one of those possessions, whose tenure is within ourselves;

ourselves; since acquired only by our virtues, it can only be lost with them. Your doubts, however, as to the motives of my stay were just. It was indeed Obrien that detain'd me: but I will spare your Lordship the constitutional vice of our sex, by arresting the rising indignation. Heaven has anticipated your vengeance, and whilst it punished the seduced, forgot not the seducer. Obrien exists no more. Without even the same chances for repentance left to the unfortunate victim of his crimes, the same hour almost brought their punishment, and may the same humanity consign both to oblivion.

Powell has doubtless inform'd you of the opinion of the physicians, that no comfort we might have procured Lady Melross would be equivalent to the miseries attending her removal. As the circumstances that detain'd us at an obscure Inn could be no secret, we had more than one enquiry into

into the fate of the unhappy object of our attention. About an hour after that was decided, I was told a Mr. Wyndham requested to see me.—He was on the road from Dover, (where the story I suppose was by that time sufficiently known) and enquired into the particulars of it, with a degree of minuteness, my countenance spoke me ill-disposed to enter upon. He grew conscious of an impropriety, and apologized for adding one question more, which was, “whether Obrien was not supposed to have made for France?”—I readily replied in the affirmative. “He will then never return alive,” said he abruptly. “As I landed to-day I saw his body brought in to be own’d, so disfigured, that the initials on his handkerchief alone awakened my suspicions. The fellows that took him up, shew’d me his watch, and other valuables, and I engaged to inform Lord Kilmarlo of the business, as soon as I arrived

in town." For this astonishing intelligence, I could only return my acknowledgments, and instantly endeavour to investigate the truth. Leaving therefore to Powell the charge of writing to your Lordship, I track'd the steps of Obrien, till I lost him by a cross road, into which he had struck, on quitting Lady Melrofs. —The evening of the day after, however, he reach'd Dover; the packet had failed; and whether urged by a motive of fear, impatience, or caprice, now never to be ascertained, tho' probably the former, as an underhand enquiry had already been made after his person, (doubtless by some emissary from London) he instantly posted to Deal, and embark'd in a cutter for Boulogne. Heaven, however, had mark'd him. —The vessel was scarce off the coast, when a hard gale blew it out of the intended course, nor could the sailors make either coast, while the closing of the night left them ill mann'd, and ill provided to encounter

counter any danger. The wind continued with a violence, of which there has been no example for many years past, and the waves of the ensuing morning wash'd a corpse ashore, that sufficiently declared the catastrophe. The crew lay under water—or at least, were not discovered till the Monday succeeding; when two bodies were found near Folkestone. All traces of identity would, however, have been lost, had not Mr. O'Brien's pocket-book, which contain'd letters and notes (both defaced, the seals excepted) inspired a curiosity, many other valuables confirmed. This account I dispatch'd by express to Lord Killaroe, as his own arms were on one of the letters; and won from his pride, (with Mr. Wyndham's interposition) what I fear his humanity would have denied.

The being, however, who liv'd at war with society, the justice of Heaven ordain'd should die unregretted by it. A
hundred

hundred eyes, probably have pass'd with vulgar curiosity, over the remains of Mr. Obrien, but not a single tear has yet fallen for him, and the susceptible Lord Kilarlo, received the Undertaker and the bill of fare, nearly at the same moment.

Mrs. Obrien will have this account from Lady Helen, to whom I have written, and your Lordship will learn thro' that channel, the situation of her spirits, and her health. Heaven has, by a singular interposition, freed you both. Whether happiness even when apparently self-dependent, can be permanent, it remains for the future to decide. I think I now stand acquitted for that secrecy of which you were so jealous. Another time, my Lord, you will, perhaps, be more just: and assure yourself, I could not so easily have satisfied my pride, had it not been indemnified, by the opportunity of obliging you.

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you. I dispatch Vaughan immediately,
and shall follow him at leisure.

Yours sincerely,

EDWARD NUGENT.

LET.

LETTER CXXV.

*To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Lady Helen
Nugent.*

Dear Edward, Grosvenor-Square, May.

SATISFY the impatience of Lord Melrofs, and tell him Mrs. Obrien is out of danger. He sends me a dozen notes in an hour, at every one of which, Lady Almerstone's face grows longer and graver; nor dare I be guilty of the horrid indecorum of addressing this to his Lordship, lest she should think, I encourage an unseasonable declaration.—Dr. S. confirms what I have said of our friend:—her spirits are wholly overset, but time and tenderness will restore them, since she is not naturally either vapourish, or consumptive. Adieu—I shall be at home by eleven.

Yours most affectionately,

HELEN NUGENT.

LETTER CXXVI.

To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen
Nugent.

May.

I Find myself so much indisposed to-day, my dearest Sophia, that I fear I shall not be able to call on you.—Do not however be alarm'd, it is only a sore throat: but write me a few lines, if possible, or we shall all be undone here. I have already had a great many civil enquiries from Lord Melrofs about my health, which I perfectly understand to be a genteel method of turning me out of the house.—But, with his Lordship's leave, he must fret, and I must nurse; for so Mr. Nugent and the Doctor have pronounced.

Have you mention'd to Lady Almerstone your intention of going with us to
Mulberry-

Mulberry-Mount? We will set out whenever you are perfectly re-established. For my own part, I cannot now be too soon there, and flatter myself the journey will be of service to both; sure I am that the idea of your company, will conduce to the happiness, if not to the health, of

Your affectionate,

H. NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER CXXVII.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs.
Obrien.*

Grosvenor-Square, June.

YOUR tender solicitude, my dearest friend, with regard to my health, I am impatient to relieve.—Assure yourself, that your society and your sympathy, have done more for me, than perhaps, the whole faculty could have effected. I am better than you would suppose possible, after so severe an indisposition.—But I must have had a strange constitution indeed, had it sustain'd such successive and horrible attacks, without being shaken.—It had borne much; a little, a very little was wanting; and, tho' freed by melancholy events from an insupportable bondage, taught to look forward to love, to fortune, to all those brilliant chimeras which

which misled my less matured understanding, it is not instantaneously, that the exhausted heart can resume its capacity for happiness. Tears have been so long its predominant expression, that even joy sometimes involuntarily borrows that language ;

"The cause remov'd, habitual griefs remain ?

"And the soul saddens, with the use of pain."

I have consider'd, and re-consider'd, in vain, upon the possibility of my accompanying you to Mulberry-Mount. Lady Almerstone seems so fully to expect my stay with the family, nay, has even express'd her desire of precipitating their journey into the country, on my account, in such friendly terms, that tho' to escape it is the warmest wish of my heart, I have not courage to offer the most distant hint of the kind. The struggle has made me for some days past so palpably restless, and
absent,

absent, that she has doubled her assiduities ;
 and I have been reduced to put a thorough constraint upon myself, lest my *révérie* should be imputed to a latent, and less pardonable cause.—Adieu :—they will now allow me to be as well as I feel myself, and oblige me to lay down my pen.

S. O.

LETTER CXXVIII.

*To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen
Nugent.*

Stanton-Audley, June.

THE first visitor I received on my return from you, was Lord Melrofs.—He came to assure himself of your recovery;—to ask a thousand questions;—to hear every thing;—to hope every thing;—to hear nothing;—to be very melancholy;—very capricious; and, in short, truly the lover.—This, I know, is a language you do not allow. *N'importe*, my dear friend, I could not help myself, neither can you. The man is very deeply in for it:—he sighs, makes long speeches;—talks of esteem, respect, and an old-fashion'd set of feelings, only to be remembered by his great grandmother.—For the most charming part of the business,

ness, is, that love is banish'd his vocabulary, at present, till both have "blanch'd their fables," and the one may utter, and the other listen to that formidable word, without glaring impropriety.—The intelligence, that you did not go with us to Mulberry-Mount, was quite unforeseen:—I hope it has not deprived his Lordship totally of the use of speech; but he dealt amazingly after, in thoughtful bows,—vacant smiles, and all those vague affirmatives, which prove the speaker to be totally ignorant that he is such. To say the truth, my dear, I know not whether, for many reasons, it is not best you should remain some time longer with Lady Almerstone. Your health is in a very delicate (I dare not alarm *myself*, by saying dangerous) state. I shall soon be confined; you must not share that confinement, if you mean to live; and your tenderness would but too much incline you to shew me every attention. Even when I recover, it

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may

may not be in my power absolutely to forbid Lord Melrofs from vifiting us, and I have my doubts as to his philosophy in forbidding himfelf. When you meet, let it be at Mulberry-Mount, *and welcome*: but as to making that the barrier between you, assure yourfelf it will never do. You will chide me for not being ferious. In truth, I do not want fenfibility,—let me fay humanity; for in this inftance, that only is neceffary.—Thofe memorable incidents which deprive any human beings of enjoyments they have purchafed with their innocence, muft at once impreff us with pity, and with awe.—But when by the caprices of fortune, we have been connected with her victims, a ftill tenderer fentiment is added, and the foftened heart views even its own bleffings for awhile, thro' the medium of tears. But it *does* view them nevertheless—thofe tears brighten infenfibly into a
thousand

thousand Iris hues, and enrich the hopes they cease to oppress. Your mourning, was for the life of Mr. Obrien; and whilst I grant much to example, decorum, and the habits of the soul, I cannot forget its dearest wishes. You are, I am sure, superior to a false delicacy, when you know it to be such; I think I should not dictate a coarseness; but by resigning you for awhile to the guidance of Lady Almerstone, I put it out of my own power to lead you into one.

On Monday we set off for Mulberry-Mount; Lord Melross talks of going into Scotland; merely I believe with the intention of being dissuaded from it: for "where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also;" and his person is generally found not far distant.—I shall take a short leave of you in Grosvenor-Square. For tho' Lady Almerstone was extremely civil during my frequent visits there, (I

might call it, my residence) I was not to learn, that I am no favorite with her Ladyship. At that time I was too miserable about you, to attend to anyone else; neither, on reflection, can I blame her. The action in my life which most contributed to its happiness, (I mean, my union with Mr. Nugent) certainly exposed me to censures, which nothing but the tenor of that life can confute. If I can live innocently, and die happily, I think I shall prove that I chose well; if otherwise, as Sir Peter Teazle says, "the crime brings its own punishment."

H. N.

L E T.

LETTER CXXIX.

*To Lady Helen Nugent, Mulberry-Monnt,
From Mrs. Obrien.*

Grosvenor-Square, July.

TO-MORROW, my dearest friend, we set off with all due pomp for Almerstone-Park.—I say due pomp, since if the ceremony of our journey, answers to that of our preparation, we shall grow old before we arrive there. Yet her Ladyship is so thoroughly good with this *etiquette*, so willing to oblige, and make me happy her way, that tho' she teazes me most intolerably at this moment, I cannot be angry with her. Now will you wonder how she can tease me.—Very easily; tho' (if we may believe the poets) rather in an unusual manner for a woman;—by holding her tongue. For tho' Lord Melrose has been with Lord Almer-

stone for two hours this morning, tho' her Ladyship certainly knows the purport of their conversation, and tho' she cannot but guess I have some curiosity to be inform'd, yet has she forborne even to indulge my ears with the name. All this, I am sure she thinks necessary, and prudent, or she would not do it; and yet I must confess, prudence never wore an unpleasanter aspect to me; than on this occasion. As his visit was to *Lord Almerstone*, there was nothing singular, in his not requesting to see me, since none of the ladies were visible: and thus, behold us separated, perhaps, for life. I could find in my heart to believe I have a presentiment. And indeed so many strange events have occurred to overturn, as well as to favor my views, that I might be romantic, without being absurd.

I am obliged to break off.—I don't know why I wrote;—I believe it was
to

to tell you my pleasure on hearing you were arrived at Mulberry-Mount, and to assure you, that my health continues to mend. How does my sweet boy after his journey?—Remember me kindly to him, to Mr. Nugent, to all.—And pity me, condemn'd to courtesy, and be dull, here, whilst my heart is with you.—Adieu.

L E T T E R CXXX.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs.
Obrien.*

A. Park, July.

ALMERSTONE-PARK, tho' it has not the same advantages with Mount-Herbert, either in regard to pictures, architecture, or ornamentals of every sort, is, in some respects, rendered superior, by the woods which surround it. The former, is indeed, perfect of its kind, and the beautiful sweep of the Thames, commanding every thing rich and fertile, gives a luxuriance to the view, not easily to be paralleled. A river, indeed, we have not here; but the sweetest of all Naiads has taken up her residence hard by, and pours her stream with so exquisite a clearness thro' the wood, as almost tempts me to turn poet. I wander there in search of health,

health, "and feel the blessed sun warm at my bosom;" or turning to the breeze, fancy I once more inhale youth, strength, and happiness.

There is a gentleness even in the enjoyments of the country, which seems to charm, without engrossing the mind; and to breathe over it a grateful calmness, more approaching to the happiness of the divinity in proportion as it appears less a sensation of pleasure in ourselves, than a mild and celestial inclination of diffusing it to others. Even the very breezes seem fraught with benevolence and purity, as they blow over the landscape; brightening every beauty, without crushing even the humblest, and diffusing to mortal bosoms, a harmony, not unlike that of their native Heaven. Enthusiastic as this description may seem, it is not merely visionary, since my happier days have frequently realized it; nor did I then ever see the setting sun, with all

those glorious scenes which succeed his departure of a summer evening, without feeling myself at once more sensible of the blessings of this life, and more worthy those of the next. There have indeed since occurred, whole weeks, in which I might say, with Hamlet, "It goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory. This most excellent canopy the air, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof, fretted with golden fires—why, it appears to me, only a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours." But the mind, however warped, cannot, if naturally good, fail to be restored by a creation so similar; and I have long since been convinc'd, that if integrity is not happiness, it is the only thing that can supply its place.

I have hopes, from Lord Almerstone's account, that the remains of my shattered fortune,

fortune, will exceed our expectations. I hardly know the event that could give me equal pleasure. The greater, as it will rescue Mr. Davenport's credit from that severe censure, it would otherwise incur. The world condemns him; and, perhaps, with justice. That world, which, nevertheless, furnish'd him with but too many examples of the fatal extravagance, by which hundreds in it are daily undone. Whether an overgrown metropolis is of advantage, politically, to a state, I am not wise enough to determine; but sure I am, it is fatal to the peace, the fortune, and the innocence, of innumerable individuals, who suppose themselves seeking only those pleasures it affords. To that monstrous idol, call'd *ton*, more wild, more unnatural, more fantastic, than any Siam, or Pegu, can afford, we daily offer up a human sacrifice, not of blood, but of reason. We should blush to bow down to it, did not increasing numbers sanctify the delusion.

delusion. Thus we voluntarily enlarge the aggregate, by whose authority we are misled, and sink the individual, in that great body, individuals only form. Extravagance becomes a system, and ruin a mere derangement; he who squanders a brilliant inheritance, or debases a noble name, is supposed only to injure himself; society takes no account of those temptations to prey upon it the poor are exposed to, or those more poignant ones to quit it, to which the dishonoured are perpetually liable. The dictatorial *We* of a news-paper-scribbler, announces to the world, the suicide, or the divorce, which supplies the succeeding column with stars, dashes, repartee, or *double entendre*; while the hireling author wraps himself up in all the pomp of obscurity and meanness to decide upon taste, elegance and beauty; the distant reader receives the mandate and sighs to partake the imaginary blaze, while the

the more fashionable circles read, smile, and emulate :—weak enough to be vain of the applause of those they despise, and corrupt enough to be indifferent to the errors their example may extend.

Do not suppose, my dearest friend, that I am acrimoniously censuring pleasures I can no longer partake. I blame only that inverted ambition by which women of fashion are led to emulate courtezans, and noblemen to rival adventurers: to place the consequence in a flaming equipage, the arms upon it sufficiently proclaim, and thus spread that rage of luxury, which endangers the morals, and destroys the happiness of those beneath.—It is certainly true, that I have more cause to feel these errors than hundreds beside; since in some I have been a partaker, and by others a sufferer: nor am I unjust enough to suppose, that either Mr. Obrien, or the unfortunate Lady Melrofs, were

were as corrupt in all instances, as their conduct in a few has denoted.—Their vices were progressive, and the consequences of their errors.—The tastes adopted by the one, naturally made the other necessary, and the habit of self-indulgence rendered the necessity indispensable.—There was never a moment in my life when my pity for both did not attend my censure; but that I may not seem affectingly to appropriate a false, or weak indulgence, I must also add, that it is not in my power to avoid affixing a heavy condemnation, equally on the living, or the dead, while my reason points out the justice of it. To arraign those who are no more, is indeed, a privilege, I have sometimes fear'd to support, tho' I cannot but think it just; and for which, even you may probably censure me; yet as the weakest, the meanest, and the most corrupt, all live, in different degrees, ideally to the future, surely that is a mistaken lenity,

lenity, which leaves it open to hope, without the due counterpoise of fear. Could guilt be taught to expect the same annihilation in the memory, it is prompted by apprehension to wish for, in a still more important article, another barrier could be thrown down, in addition to those sophistry and fashion have united to undermine, and this world would be defied, as well as the next.—Adieu, my dear friend.

S. O.

L E T.

L E T T E R CXXXI.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs.
Obrien.*

A. Park, July.

YOUR fortnight's silence could not fail, my dear friend, to alarm, and perplex me, had not Mr. Nugent been so kind as to relieve my anxiety.—Assure him of my gratitude for the few lines he honour'd me with.* I quarrel with them only because they were few; and far from wishing you to write, whilst you continue indisposed, I enjoin you to the contrary, under pain of my total silence; which, with sorrow I confess, is not at present a very heavy penalty.

My life, I think has been, hitherto, pretty variously engross'd. I have been alternately
sad,

*Omitted.

sad, sick, anxious: every thing, but dull;
 and, strange to tell! this is now amidst
 the list of my grievances. There is a
 quietness, and uniformity, in the style of
 living here, which would be sufficiently a-
 greeable to me, could I be allow'd to in-
 dulse my own reflections; but that is out
 of the question; for I am never alone:
 and the fatigue of maintaining a vague,
 and uninteresting conversation, becomes
 often insupportable. Lady Almerstone is
 no reader, except of fashionable books,
 which unfortunately are not always the
 best calculated for my ideas of entertain-
 ment. When she *has* read, she has no
 opinion, till she sees the next review.
 —And when that has furnished her with
 one, she never defends it. Company, we
 have none, except gentlemen, of which
 we every day at dinner see three or four;
 most of them officers, from the regiment
 quartered at D. I may literally, how-
 ever, term it *seeing* them; for to offer a
 single

single word, beyond a mere monosyllable, to any one, would fix her Ladyship root-bound in her chair. Their visits are solely considered as an interchange of civilities between themselves, and Lord Almerstone. They understand the *etiquette* of the rest of the family, and that every thing beyond a profound deference, and silent respect, would be esteem'd an intrusion. Our dinner, therefore, consists of two entire distinct parties. Lady Almerstone heads her table, with that ease and high-breeding she shews on every occasion. I fill the right hand; Lady Euphemia, (her waist very small, her hair powdered very brown, and her little chin doubled in, as if the ornaments on her head were burthenfome) graces the left: the younger ladies do not make their appearance till tea. His Lordship and the accidental guests, alone interrupt the profound silence during our repast, and our exit

exit is made, as soon, as in decency, it can; after which we meet no more.—To this rule there is only one exception, in a Major Burrell; who, (from what pretensions, I know not) is a sort of favorite with both Lord, and Lady, Almerstone.—He is a young man; they call him handsome; I should not have esteem'd him so: but he is tall, florid, shewy, with that sort of plausible understanding, which makes its way frequently beyond the more solid. To me he has particularly address'd himself, on many occasions, in the most insidious manner.—I mean, by an inferred respect for my opinion, and judgment, more flattering than the most extravagant admiration of my person. Lady Almerstone, who sometimes breaks thro' her reserves so far as to converse with him, is not displeased with the attention he shews me, as she looks upon the Major to be a man of distinguish'd understanding; tho' did she entertain an idea, that his politeness amount-

ed

ed to gallantry, I question whether he would be admitted again to the honor of her notice. Let him keep his own secret, however, and I shall not betray it.— We must love, or hate those, whom we think of consequence enough to be noticed on such occasions; and my heart is too remote from all who surround me here, to lay me under the necessity of asking it the question. Strange that the very tranquillity we court, should not be empower'd to make us happy.

Hélas! où donc chercher, où trouver le bonheur?—
 En tout lieu, en tout tems, dans toute la Nature,
 Nulle part tout entier, partout avec mesure,
 Et partout passager, hors dans son seul Auteur.
 Il est semblable au feu, dont la douce chaleur
 Dans chaque autre élément en secret s'infinuë,
 Descend dans les rochers, s'élève dans la nuë,
 Va rougir le corail dans le sable des Mers,
 Et vit dans les glaçons qu'ont durci les hivers.

My

My boasted tranquillity has, however, been disturbed by a trifling circumstance. —The charm is dissolved, and Lady Almerstone has spoken. Spoken, of Lord Melrofs, my dear. I was not all *ear*, that is a weak term, but rather all soul; and what is worse, all scarlet, from surprize, and perturbation. She began, by asking me if I thought there would be any impropriety in her admitting a visitor, to whom I was the chief attraction. With an eagerness, I should afterwards most wofully have regretted, I was going to answer in the affirmative; when, probably recollecting she had ask'd me an awkward question, she added, with a smile, that she was not quite clear whether she ought to refer it to my decision: since the visit, tho' meant *at*, was not directed to me. "In short," continued her Ladyship, "my son, and Lady Maria, will soon be here. We have long promised to go down with them into Devonshire, and the chief design of their

their journey, is to request your company. That part of the Colonel's letter, which relates to Lord Melrofs, you will see." She put it into my hand; but it might have been Hebrew: for the powerful effect of a name I had not now heard for some months, seem'd to have convert-ed me into an idiot, which I clearly prov-ed by turning the letter twice round, before I knew which way to begin it. It did not contain, however, above half a dozen lines, familiar, and lively enough; mentioning that Lord Melrofs was to shoot with him the ensuing month, in Devonshire, and had engaged to be of their party to A. Park.—The date of the Colonel's letter, was Mount-Herbert.——And as, in the conclusion he said something of Lady Maria, and her *cecisbeo*, I very fairly suppos'd his Lordship had contriv'd to make his party good with one branch of the family, to insure a smiling reception from the
other

other. She then mention'd the conversation he held with Lord Almerstone, the day before we left town; which, as I truly guessed, related solely to me; and contained every thing I could have expected, from his generosity, or his affection. His *generosity*—Oh, my dear, why do we sigh at being indebted to those we most esteem: yet there are moments when I look back with regret, on the fortune, the youth, nay, even the personal advantages I have lost; and grieve that I can bring Lord Melrofs, no graces, but those his love bestows on me—idle chagrins!—We should never prove, how vain we can be at some moments, but by the fits of humility that seize us at others. I knew not I thought myself handsome, till I found out the wonderful secret, that I was no longer so; and if I do not lay down my pen, I have my doubts whether my opinions may not undergo another reverse, perhaps much more absurd than the former.



I have just made a discovery relative to my lover, the Major, which will I believe put a period to our gallantries. It is rather unlucky, to be sure, but the good man is married: he forgot it I suppose; and probably would not have been sorry the lethean draught had been convey'd to all his acquaintance. By having strain'd his leg, he was prevented from making one of our party at dinner; and consequently became the chief topic of conversation there. —The gentlemen, were, however, unanimous in their encomiums. “Burrell, was the life of the corps; an honest fellow; a worthy fellow; one of the most open-hearted fellows upon earth”——

“Pray Sir,” says an old officer at my elbow, “where is his wife?”

“His wife!” return'd one of his warmest panegyrists,—“Oh aye!—his wife!—why faith, I don't know; I believê she's somewhere:

somewhere:—I saw her, about a month ago! poor devil, in a miserable condition at York. We forwarded a subscription to send her over to her friends, but I think she was fool enough to talk of following him.”

“Pray,” said Lord Almerstone, with some surprise, “is he married then?”

“Oh yes, my Lord! he married about a year and a half ago, a woman with a pretty jointure, which *he* contrives to spend; for I believe she has seen but little of it since.”

“Has he any family?”

“He had a good fine boy: but I fancy Burrell does not trouble himself much, either about the son or the mother.”——

Lord Almerstone changed the conversation: his Lady dropt her eyes, as she does when she is displeased; and I secretly form'd my determinations, as to the worthy, honest, pleasant Major Burrell.

On Monday next our party is expected from Mount-Herbert ; Oh, how many heart-flutterings have I to undergo before that period arrives. I have submitted implicitly to Lady Almerstone's judgment, in regard to the decorum of my meeting with Lord Melrofs. As he goes with the Colonel into Devonshire, his stay here, she says, will be short ; (short indeed, since we are now in August) and, if it is thought improper, that his Lordship should be of the same party with me, she will either remain at the Park, and make it a mere excursion for the gentlemen, or consent to my visiting you. I did not tell her my opinion that this shooting scheme was a pretence, and never intended to be executed ; which, however, I cannot help supposing : since Lord Melrofs would surely either not come at all, or endeavour to prolong his stay, (if only in compliment) beyond the limits of a day, or two. On these occasions fortune generally decides so much better

better for us, than we can for ourselves, that I have made it almost a rule, never to interfere, till the last moment;—and if shooting is so very pleasant an amusement, as voluntarily to engage him, —why, pray let him shoot.—Oh, how lightly do we talk, when the heart is at ease. One moment's serious doubt, would compleatly check this ready pen, which the sweet sensation of happiness, now leaves not under the necessity of seeking a sentiment.

Adieu, my dear friend!—When your health is restored, let me hear from you; and be assured, that valued health, is ever an object for the prayers of,

Your affectionate,

S. O.

LETTER CXXXII,

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs.
Obrien.*

A. Park, August.

AND so you have really made me the dupe of a kind artifice, and brought us a little girl, whilst I supposed you only thinking of it. Mr Nugent's second letter* was indeed a surprise upon me; and the intelligence of your danger, at the very moment, probably, when I received his first, made me tremble even on reflection. He assures me you are now beyond all apprehension: and it is on occasions like this, we feel the value of a sincerity in which we can confide; since, even where my heart is most feelingly alive to doubt, and anxiety, it can so firmly repose on his. May Heaven,
my

*Omitted.

my dearest friend, extend your blessings, with your ties; and return upon your own bosom, all that happiness, you so well know how to diffuse!——A little incident has occur'd, since my last, which has shock'd, interested, and agitated me; and as this will not reach you, till well enough to support the relation, I may venture to make it,

When I told you, I had form'd my determinations as to Major Burrell, I was not aware that Lady Almerstone had done the same: her sense of morality was infinitely too strong, to permit her to shew any encouragement, towards a man who deserved it so little, and from not seeing him at table, I presently understood, he was no longer a welcome guest there. The morning being remarkably cool, and beautiful, we yesterday set out for D. in order to return a visit, or two, Lord Almerstone wish'd his lady to no-

tice. We were walking slowly along the Park, the carriages following, when a flaming beau on horseback, advanced on the gallop towards us, whom, on a nearer view, we discovered to be the Major; he recognized us, and instantly dismounting, gave the reins to his servant, with an air, gay and graceful enough, whilst he join'd us. Lady Almerstone look'd grave; I was silent; but an unfortunate fit of loquacity had seized upon the gentleman, and he was not to be daunted. He walked on with us; talk'd much; and laugh'd more. About a quarter of a mile from the town, whilst we waited for the carriages to draw up, a woman cross'd the road, from a shady lane, which is used as a foot-path. Her dress was the shabby genteel; almost, indeed, below that; a flounced petticoat, with a chintz pattern gown; a hat, with a hundred streamers flying, and a cloak cover'd with powder. She

She turn'd her head from a motive of curiosity, to view the party, as she past.— But what became of me, when I saw, (tho' haggard, and alter'd) the features of Mrs. Davenport. I did not faint; but a half scream involuntarily escap'd me, as I seiz'd the arm of the Major, who seem'd, indeed, little less disconcerted than myself.—The unfortunate object of my attention, instantly knew me, and, without a second look, walked on abruptly; whilst Lady Almerstone, seeing my eye still eagerly pursue her, ask'd the Major, "if he knew that woman."

"That woman," Madam, return'd the mortified beau, with a profound bow.— "The woman there, Madam,—is—is—is my wife.—At your Ladyship's service."— One single glance, at the conclusion of this curious speech, compleatly annihilated the Major; who look'd, indeed, as if he could with joy have stepp'd up behind that carriage, into which he was vainly offering

offering to put us. I was by this time so far recovered, as to enter it; and while driving back to the Park, I recounted to her Ladyship, the cause of my emotion: she was touch'd with it, as well as myself; and we agreed, that Lord Almerstone should order some examination to be made into the state of the Major's affairs.

A long, long train of sad reflections, had now, however, taken possession of my mind; which Lady Almerstone perceiving, enter'd more fully upon an enquiry into the past, than she had hitherto done.—She question'd me in a very pointed manner, as to Mr. Obrien's opinion of Lord Melrofs; (to whom, by the bye, she is extremely partial.)—And whether he ever entertained any jealousy of him. I assured her, I believ'd not; and that at the only period of my life when he could have cause for a surmise, (that is, during his Lordship's

Lordship's visit to Winbrook) he had never express'd any :—she ask'd me why he disliked him. The answer was obvious.—Mr. O'Brien, early sunk his fortune, and his talents, in the world ; whilst Lord Melross gain'd upon it in both. Could Mr. O'Brien have made the latter his dupe, it is possible he would never have hated him, or, could he have made him the partaker in his vices, he would, probably, never have injured him. But failing in either attempt, he look'd up to his merits with jealousy, and to his rank with envy. He had discernment enough to perceive, that I was, by a combination of chances, an object for the same sentiments to Lady Somerset, and that nothing was wanting to what they would have deem'd the triumph of Lord Melross, and myself, but a connection, which, however criminal, was but too probable. To awaken me to all the horrors of such a situation, before I had

tailed its guilty enjoyments, was, undoubtedly their chief motive for alarming my fears, as to the censures of the world; to that world, Mr. O'Brien knew Miss Sutherland was devoted; nor could there be a more successful method of winning her, than by forwarding her views in it. They were probably acquainted with each other's sentiments, long before any other connection took place; or rather, that connection, arose from an intimacy so dangerous. For they never loved.— Love! that sweet, and powerful enchantment, which lends a charm even to the faults of its object, and when, unwillingly, we see them, still makes us flatter ourselves, they are not noticed by the world, was unknown to either. It was the phantom of the day they fought: I have heard them laugh alternately at each other, at the moments when they must have been most intimately connected: and fly from the sweets of a private circle,

cle, in which they might have mingled unobserved, to dissipation, to glare, to the croud, which absorbs every sentiment but vanity, and every talent, but that of dangerous derision. The reflections I was making to Lady Almerstone were much of this nature, when I was interrupted by a note. I knew the hand, and sicken'd at the sight; it ran as follows.

“A. Burrell's (late Davenport's) most affectionate respects to Mrs. Obrien;—would have taken the liberty of waiting upon her, had she sooner known, that Mrs. Obrien had been at Almerstone-Park, but was very much surpris'd, at meeting her on the road to-day.

A Burrell has been very ill, since she last saw Mrs. Obrien, but hopes to be able when next they meet, to say something, in vindication of her conduct, on a particular

particular occasion; and will come down to A. Park, any evening Mrs. Obrien may appoint."

Water's-Street; Friday night.

If I had been shock'd at sight of the note itself, how much more was I, at the style: it flattered every nerve. To fall in spirit, as in fortunes, is the distinction of little minds. Without a standard within themselves, they sink, or rise upon the billows of the world, and know no medium between pride, and meanness. Whilst the reflecting, and the upright heart, fixes its own estimate, is unfortunate, without being degraded; and imparts an innate dignity, even to those reverses, which deprive it of every external one.

I wrote a long, and, in some respects, impassion'd answer, to this billet. To see her was impossible. Had the wound I received from her, been inflicted by the

the hand of a stranger, I think I could more easily have forgotten it; but "it was my companion, my guide, mine own familiar friend," who oppressed my youth with sorrow, and embittered my maturer years with regret. I would have done much to serve her, for she was unfortunate, but to see her was, I felt, impossible.

After a variety of emotions, so unforeseen, and so trying, you will imagine I am ill-prepared to see Lord Melrofs.— Yet this day, this very hour, perhaps, we are to meet. Oh Heavens! can it be possible! my trembling fingers prove I think it so, and oblige me to break off.

* * * * *

Will there be no end of these tumults? A servant is just arrived, to say, the party will not be here till evening. I am
grown

grown stupid ; I could not see he had a livery on.

" Here comes a gentleman," said I, to Lady Euphemia, as we were looking thro' the window.

" Of a new creation," said she smiling, " if we may judge by his cape, and his cuffs."



The fears, the anxieties, the flutters of my heart, are at length subsided.—Its flutters, did I say ! Oh, no ; they are but begun. Misjudging world, which gives no passion the name of romance, but that which is most ennobling, and most conducive to happiness ; envy, ambition, and revenge, find their advocates, and are allow'd to be at least, the failings of noble souls : whilst love, that divine gift of the Creator, which unites each to each, and all to him, is treated as the delirium

of youth; a mad dream, from which we are to derive only restlessness, and regret. —But do we ever live so truly to the world at large, as when we imagine we exist but for one being in it? It is then, we desire to become truly estimable. It is then, divested of those light vanities which debase the emulation that excited them, we would, rise the objects of universal approbation; proud, to sacrifice in secret that little tribute to him for whom alone we desired it. Love, has made many victims, it is true; but could we see the hearts it has humbled, and purified, the virtues (even tho' ideal) it has taught those hearts to emulate, we should often esteem it one of the first principles of good amidst mankind.

The moment the carriages drew up to the gate, I turn'd so faint, I thought I should have expos'd myself. Fortunately it was the close of the evening, and the greetings

greetings between Lady Almerstone, and her own family, sufficiently engross'd them. —But what do you think that strange man, Lord Melrofs did! March'd up with the most perfect solemnity, after the Colonel, and saluted her Ladyship, who was not at all aware of the compliment; whilst I look'd so extremely silly, as shew'd I appropriated it.

Pleasure, that great touchstone, to which every heart vibrates, for awhile made us all one character. I was no longer silent; Lord Almerstone no longer a stoic; his Lady no longer stiff; and this formidable meeting, lost every thing but its happiness. We have retired late, but I am deceived, if any of us are thinking of rest, our host excepted. Lady Almerstone, is closeted with her darling daughter; Lady Euphemia, talking to her French governess; Lord Melrofs and the Colonel, still in the

the supper-room, and I, one moment listening, and another scribbling; catching the distant sounds of that voice my ear has so long missed; and quarrelling with my heart, whenever it is deceived by the more vociferous and less pleasant tone of his companion. I am mistaken, however, if this good Colonel is not perfectly in his Lordship's confidence as to me; or rather, his Lordship is in so very good a humour, that he has no secrets it can be any compliment to confide.

To be diffuse, was ever the foible of my heart, and, at the approach of happiness I feel it return. Heavens, how sweetly, when warmed by that powerful sensation, does it expand with its own feelings, and give ideal consequence to all the trifles of the moment. Let me pause over this exquisite period of my life.—Ah, perhaps it has none more exquisite to offer. This period, when ripening hopes

hopes swelled almost into certainty, become every instant adorned with new tints. I have thought myself nearly into tears, and therefore had better break off. —Tears, however, far different from those painful, those agonizing drops I have so often shed. Love, invigorating power, thou who canst alone revive the heart, withered by worldly cares, and mental struggles, thro' every tie do I look up to thee with gratitude; whether tremulating from the soft lisplings of infancy, the tender cautions of age, or the more dangerous and tumultuous accents breathed from less matured feelings,—still, in a well governed mind, art thou the source of good—humbling its vanities, correcting its selfishness, bidding it taste the blessing of bestowing happiness, and, finally, the sweet reward of receiving it.

Adieu, most beloved friend.—My warmest, my tenderest anxieties ever attend you and yours.

L E T-

LETTER CXXXIII.

*To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen
Nugent.*

Mulberry-Mount, August.

THANKS, my dearest Sophia, for your kind wishes: from minds like yours, they come with the force of benedictions; and that they are in part fulfilled, my being allowed to acknowledge them under my own hand, will sufficiently prove.—To participate in all your enjoyments is so much a happiness, that I am afraid it will not pass for a merit, and yet it is the greatest I can claim.

When I was scarcely sufficiently recovered to see any company, we were surprised with a visit from my brother and Lady Somerset: it was a start of kindness however, on his part, and therefore gave
me

me great pleasure; the more so, as he is really far from well, and requires a more attentive, and affectionate companion, than her Ladyship; who having been some months past, rather in a declining state, is whimsical beyond all description. Spenser has a nervous fever, caused, I fear, by drinking, that has made him too very low and vapourish, and having been ordered to change the air frequently, he would not, he said, pass thro' this county without visiting *Mr. Nugent*, and me.—

Here was a revolution, my dear! but the unhinged frame, will call upon the social affections; and teach us in sickness all the value of those ties, on which, prosperous health, looks down with contempt.—They found Edward and myself enjoying the sweets of the woodbine, just as the moon was rising, like the spirit of coolness, from behind the brow of the adjoining hill, after a most scorching day. Her Ladyship took

took the earliest opportunity of hinting at the vulgarism we were guilty of; and, producing her essence bottle, assured us how unequal she was to supporting such strong odours. Entertain'd us with a long story of a man that *cainter'd* backwards and forwards, whom she chose to take for a highwayman, and was, in short, more frivolous and affected than ever.

Mr. Nugent and my brother were so captivated with a beautiful spot in their ride, the next day, that they insisted on shewing it us. The airing was long, nevertheless I ventured it; and was fully repaid. It is one of the sweetest vales I ever beheld. A lovely river winds thro' it, the banks of which, are fringed with a happy inequality; on one side is a beautiful hanging wood, where clumps of old trees darken the view, and contrast the autumnal shades of purple, green, or brown, seen in the younger plants.—A
few

few groups of cattle, and cottages, with a neat and well-built house, almost embosom'd, the front of which was covered with vine, and jessamine, compleated the view: I was peopling this retreat in my imagination, and contriving what apology I should make, when on entering abruptly, we should find a young lady seated at a harpsichord, whilst an old one of a *very striking demeanor*, turn'd over a globe at some distance, when lo! on examination, the mansion proved to be uninhabited; and I had the mortification of seeing a spot, which seemed the region of romance, utterly thrown away. How insipid do fortune and title appear at some moments: the divine tranquillity of the prospect, the purity of the air, and the murmuring of the river, which was the only sound, except the occasional bleatings of sheep, made me half wish I could see you and Lord Melross turn'd rustics there, with a race of lively brunettes, glowing, "celestial
rosy

rosy red," thro' the tan of exercise; whilst Edward, and myself, would take up our abode in some neighbouring cottage, and set fine cloaths, and fine liveries at defiance.

As people are always in extremes, my good brother is suddenly seized with an inclination to patronize the man he oppressed. He has been talking to Mr. Nugent about an electioneering business, in which he could serve him; but the latter is so inflexibly honest, that I am sure it will never do. The member proposed, has indeed very little influence; but what is to be hoped in favor of one, who should tell them, (as Edward, probably might) that he cannot afford to buy, because he does not intend to sell; and that in proportion as they think they honour him in conferring the duty, he shall believe he obliges them in undertaking it. We live in Old England,

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gland, not in Old Rome, my good friend, so take my word for it, this is a doctrine, the sturdy votaries of beef and pudding will not be made to understand.

Your rencontre with Mrs. Davenport, (I have forgotten her other name) was one of those events, which tho' the mind cannot be said to be prepared for, ought hardly to surprise it. The weak, the vain, and the vicious, are ever more particularly the dupes of that blind goddess they follow. Misled by the reigning folly of the moment, they deviate imperceptibly from the common track, and rise, or fall, they know not how. She is punished, however; and to pity her is the extent of my charity.

When it is your pleasure to descend from your forms, with Lord Melross, and listen to his voice in a still pleasanter tone,

tone, it will be a most welcome piece of intelligence to both Edward and myself.

—I am so malicious, that I will not tell you what his Lordship says on the occasion; tho' he has written us a long letter.

—However, it is not *very much* to your disadvantage. —Mr. Nugent obliges me to conclude.

H. N.

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L E T.

LETTER CXXXIV.

*To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs.
Obrien.*

A. Park, August.

THE distance between Lord Melrofs, and myself, which you are so solicitous to remove, it has not been long in my power to preserve, whatever might have been my inclination. I begin to believe, he was not born to be denied;—Alas, I once thought otherwise; however, his Lordship was so determined to make the experiment, that, in order to avoid being distressed by attentions he was at no pains to conceal, I became almost as solicitous of an explanation as himself.—Having made a party to dine in the woods to-day, we set out early, and returned late, the weather being particularly favourable:—could I believe my senses! placed under the protection of Lord Melrofs,

ross,—my arm in his—it was (for the first time) permitted me to listen to him;—and never was the choice of my heart, so flattered by my reason. The light, the gay, the frothy part of his disposition, those captivating levities which charm us in the intercourse of the world, subsiding for awhile,—left him truly himself. His character, at once more simple, and more elevated, rose upon me such as nature had form'd it; warm, penetrating, manly; demanding my esteem; exciting my respect; capable of inspiring the permanent attachment mind alone creates, and of feeling all it inspired. Surely I never loved till then; or rather, my love never received that powerful sanction, which strikes from the understanding upon the heart, and ennoble the sentiment it confirms.

Amidst a variety of other subjects, Lord Melross touch'd upon his family affairs; his mother's fate—Ah that unfortunate mother; who, robbed of all her rights—excluded

alike from the affluence and rank she was entitled to demand—from the still more valuable blessings of conjugal and maternal affection,—sunk, an early victim to accumulated injuries. He shewed me her picture; it was so beautiful a likeness of himself, that I was tempted to accuse him of vanity in producing it;—the form of the face—the very smile so natural to him when he speaks;—of all that wonderful resemblance we have so often discovered in him to his father, none but in the eyes remained. He ought to be handsome, since I believe he had the handsomest parents France or England could afford.—I had not courage to enquire into the particulars of his mother's character, or situation, and judged from his silence, it was a subject too tender for explanation; we therefore insensibly fell upon that of his litigation with Mr. Erskine, which he treated with a degree of philosophy, the warmth of his temper, and the pride that has ever been supposed one of its marking

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ing *traits*, gave us little reason to expect : but it is the distinction of superior minds, silently to extirpate in their progress thro' life, those constitutional imperfections, which time only engrafts more deeply in weak ones. Lord Melross, will perhaps, always be a proud man ; but he will distinguish the pride of merit, from that of situation, with which, perhaps, it has been hitherto but too much blended ; for they must boast an uncommon degree of perfection, who can early distinguish sentiments so similar, and often so perplexed with each other, that the delusion of self-love, is hardly necessary to make us confound them. Ardent, impassioned, ambitious, his outset in life was marked by too impetuous a love of its distinctions ; a love, which breaking thro' the ties of subordination, nature, and reason, taught him to treat a father with contumely, and confound remonstrance with disrespect : nor tho' possessing nobler distinctions within, than those external ones he aspired to,

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was he sensible of their value.—The error, tho' innocent, has severely corrected itself. Evils, incurred by worldly advantages, mental ones only have alleviated; experience has convinced him, that to be elevated in rank, is to carry a torch thro' an obscure night, whose splendor oftener dazzles the bearer, than those around, and is less a protection from villainy, than a guide to it. Withdrawing from the distinctions of birth, or the brilliance of wit, his heart has alternately rested on Mr. Nugent, or Sir George Irwin; in the one, he has seen the superior influence of understanding, awe rank into insignificance; in the other, the irresistible charm of goodness, has bade even talents claim but the second place. By learning thus to estimate the hearts of others, his own becomes corrected. The weak and erring pride, which once only taught him to seek the world, refining into a nobler principle, now sets him above it; and even those distinctions which
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he then regarded as substitutes for desert, are insensibly become only its incitements. To that romance of youth, which is always warm, never discriminating, and as often flaming into a vice, as a virtue, a calm and rational system of conduct has succeeded: if I have been fortunate enough to assist in lending stability to such a character, surely the more captivating of my sex, ought studiously to watch those principles in their own bosoms, which are to arrest the wavering ones in the bosoms of others. Man, tho' born with the vigorous and marking virtues which distinguish his career thro' life, frequently suffers the humbler ones that must constitute its happiness, to be crushed by education, and custom. These, it is the part of woman to preserve; and while from his example she acquires candor, stability, and fortitude, she must inculcate by her own, the no less useful qualifications, of gentleness, and self-denial.—You will say

I preach—I am afraid I do. Severe experience is a sort of early old-age, and is apt to make us garrulous. My heart takes a dubious pleasure in dwelling at intervals upon the past,—in trembling over those scenes when sad reflection involuntarily made me wise, and expanding to that future, which is to make me happy.

Lord Melrofs did not conceal from me, that he had no intention of going into Devonshire, but that not being able, otherwise, to accomplish our meeting, or break thro' the reserves of Lady Almerstone, he had adopted such a pretence, in order to effect both. I made every engagement consistent with that decorum, which the world, (if for the sake of example merely) has a right to demand; and not being able to punish myself so far as voluntarily to shun his society, frankly assured him that I would endeavour to remain in London, (where he engaged to be) on
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our quitting the Park. When I made this agreement, I was not aware that Lady Maria, and the Colonel, were so deep in his plots, as I found them: since, in two hours more, they had compleatly dissuaded Lady Almerstone from the Devonshire journey, and by engaging her to go to Twickenham in a fortnight, fixed us all near enough to Mount-Herbert, to secure a meeting whenever we please.

But who, think you, is to be of our party?—A name-sake of mine, of whom you made mention when in Scotland;—Miss Vernon. The grandfather, on whom she depended, is lately dead, having left her an ample fortune: and as she is on an intimate footing with Lady Maria, they mean to spend some time together, both in the country and in town. Do not ask me my opinion of your favorite; I must know her a little better before I can form one.—I am inclined to think, a stronger magnet

magnet than friendship brought her here, and that being now informed of the secret engagements of Lord Melross, she feels disappointed and hurt. We are therefore, at present, each bent on developing the character of the other; and to own the truth, his Lordship's good spirits have made him such excellent company, that he has engrossed the whole party. Oh, happiness, happiness, how sweet, how benign would be thy influence, did it not as often give birth to the weed, as to the rose; and too frequently wither the one, while the coarser, and more stubborn nature of the other, flourishes, and spreads beneath the beam. May it shine, distinguishingly, lastingly upon my friend, is the sincere prayer of her ever affectionate,

S. OBRIEN.

End of the FOURTH VOLUME.



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